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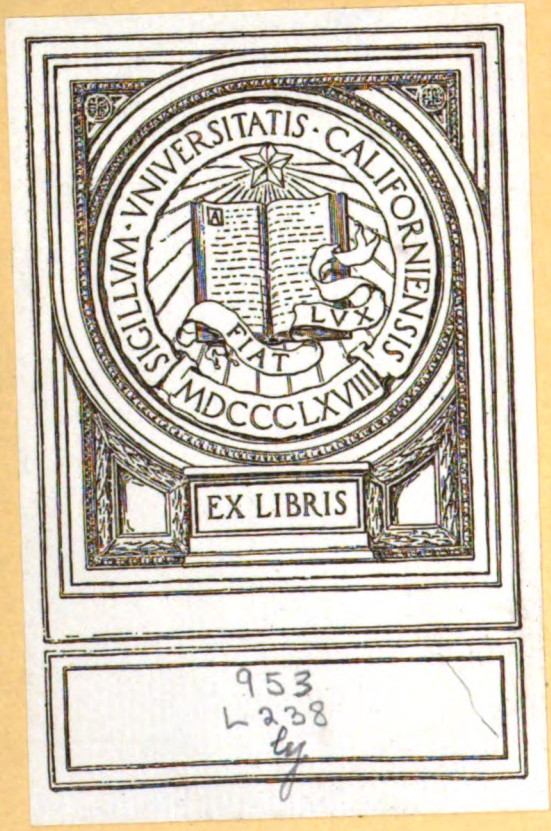

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LYRICS *of* EARTH

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Archibald Lampman

UNIV. OF

LYRICS of EARTH

SONNETS AND BALLADS

by

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

With an Introduction by

Duncan Campbell Scott

Musson Book Company Ltd.
Toronto

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LYRICS of EARTH

SONNETS AND BALLADS

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ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

With an Introduction by

Duncan Campbell Scott

The Musson Book Company Ltd.
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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

THIS book is the realization of a plan that I formed shortly after the publication of the Memorial Edition of Archibald Lampman's poems. That volume was put together and issued after his death for the purpose of giving immediate financial aid to his widow; happily it was successful, owing to the co-operation of his admirers and to the reduction of the cost to a minimum. The project was aided by a generous gift of one thousand dollars from George Iles, Esq., of Montreal and New York, the Linotype Company of Montreal set up the book free of charge, and the paper and binding were given at cost price. But there was never any doubt in my mind that while serving that purpose it would also establish his fame as a poet. It has done so and the quality of the poems, deeply sincere and affectionate, have already gained from his countrymen a regard for his name which is likewise sincere and affectionate. In this first book almost everything that he had written was included. The critical faculty was in suspension. The aim was to produce a book attractive from its bulk, and considering the prime object of the publication, that idea was laudable enough. But

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after an interval the critical faculty asserted itself, and the desire arose to make a book some day that would contain the best of the poet's work—a book that would be smaller and that would leave an unblurred impression of poems highly imagined and nobly wrought. The single motive of Lampman's life was poetry. Writing of himself in 1893 he said "Poetry has seized and enveloped the whole field. To speak vernacularly, I do not care a hang for anything but poetry." He meant the practice of the art of poetry, the determination for self-expression through that art; and the very singleness of that purpose, the intensity of the desire to produce led him not infrequently to deal with matters and to adopt methods that were far from the natural bent of his genius. He recognized this himself, and there is no doubt that he would have excluded the longer poems which merely served to add pages to that first volume and doubtless he would have outgrown a liking for many of his youthful verses if his life had been longer. I am convinced that his mind was developing and maturing rapidly. There is evidence of it in his later poems, composed before any physical weakness had overtaken him. In 1893 he wrote of himself "There is one kind of work I can do—nature work, as they call it—to go afield, out of my line, will only involve me in bitter disappointment and the sense of failure, which is the worst hell the human soul can know!" I doubt that he would have been so sure of his *métier* three or four

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years after that date. He never lost his joy in the emotional portrayal of nature but there were strains of human feeling in his later work that would have compelled him to modify that earlier statement; he had gone afield, out of his native line and had suffered no sense of failure. It would be an unprofitable task, no doubt, to endeavour to select from the work of a dead poet the things which he himself would have chosen had he matured. The growth of his mind and the development of his critical faculty must of necessity be imagined. Browning, it will be remembered, made a selection of his own poems and strung them "on the thread of an imaginary personality." He found it necessary to have some plan to follow or some centre of criticism to depend upon and he chose his own characteristic method. The poems remain, but discernible neither in their choice nor in their sequence is the thread of the imaginary personality. I have neither endeavoured to think of what our poet would have preferred nor have I indulged in any fanciful or rigid method of selection. I remembered that he once wrote "To have written a good stanza is the finest sensation on earth. If one has produced something really good one experiences a magnificent enjoyment." I determined to use this pronouncement as a touchstone and judge each poem by its content of delight, by its essential appeal to the author first, so far as that might be imagined, and second to the reader, remembering Matthew Arnold's cautionary

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lines on the connection between the pleasures of creation and contemplation. No doubt the absolute pleasures of creation as touched upon by Lampman are rare, and correspondingly rare are the raptures of contemplation, and no one would expect merely the quintessence of feeling gathered up and brought together. That would be too severe a method for any poet to withstand. But the poems I have chosen on this principle of selection will be found each to contain in degree a feeling of creative delight that will be communicated to the reader.

In arranging the poems I have adopted three main divisions. Under *Lyrics of Earth* will be found the poems that refer purely to nature, and not at all or hardly to life and conduct; under *Poems and Ballads* are those pieces in which there is a mingling of nature and life; under *Sonnets,* all that he wrote in this form is given.

Lampman, no doubt, began to make verses when he was a lad. He dedicated the volume "Alcyone", which was ready for publication when he died "To my father who first instructed me in the art of verse." None of these attempts have been preserved; they must have been youthful, for Lampman left home for boarding school when he was a mere boy, and the literary influence of the father could not thereafter have been exerted continuously. There is always a flow of doggerel at schools and colleges, doggerel breaking now and then, not infrequently, into flashes of real poetry, and without

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any strain of the imagination we may fancy the father and son comparing their inventions during holidays or at other times. The father was able to instruct by example; he had a gift for versification and a true delight in poetry, the sort of worshipful delight that accompanies an admiration for the productions of the Augustan age of English literature. Minds that are strongly influenced by these writers take on a sort of serene surety which makes them proof against criticism. They transfer the golden calm of the ancient classics to the day of Dryden and the glow pervades the time of Addison and Pope and lingers down through Collins and Gray to die out with Crabbe. The mind of the elder Lampman was rooted in such a critical serenity, a certainty of faith in Pope, for example, which was proof against the loose and unorthodox attacks of the rebel admirers of the extravagant Shelley and Keats. In these Parnassians was a body of perfection that could not be successfully assailed or broken up and the "instruction" given the pupil by the teacher was based on that tradition. Even technically this was all to the good and most valuable was the ideality that pervaded the home, the unusual atmosphere that made artistic effort both in music and poetry a matter of importance. Beyond that home influence there was little or nothing in the Canada of that day to stimulate a developing genius. Lampman could not feel that he was surrounded by those artistic tendencies, that give confidence and glow to creative effort. But

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happily when he was at Trinity College, probably in 1881, he did experience a shock of surprise communicated from outside his dull environment which was of great importance just at that moment of his development. An enthusiasm then flamed up and afterwards never died down. It was rooted in sudden admiration for the work of an individual, and in pride that the enkindling cause was native. But he should be allowed to tell of it in his own words:

> It was almost ten years ago, and I was very young, an undergraduate at college. One May evening somebody lent me "Orion and other Poems" then recently published. Like most of the young fellows about me, I had been under the depressing conviction that we were situated hopelessly on the outskirts of civilization, where no art and no literature could be, and that it was useless to expect that anything great could be done by any of our companions, still more useless to expect that we could do it ourselves. I sat up most of the night reading and re-reading "Orion" in a state of the wildest excitement and when I went to bed I could not sleep. It seemed to me a wonderful thing that such work could be done by a Canadian, by a young man, one of ourselves. It was like a voice from some new paradise of art, calling to us to be up and doing. A little after sunrise I got up and went out into the college grounds. The air, I remember, was full of the odour and cool sunshine of the spring morning. The dew was thick upon the grass, all the birds of our Maytime seemed to be singing in the oaks, and there were even a few adder tongues and trilliums still blooming on the slope of the little ravine. But everything was transfigured for me beyond description, bathed in an old world radiance of beauty; the magic of the lines was sounding in my ears, those divine verses, as they seemed to me, with their Tennyson-like richness and strange earth-loving Greekish flavour. I have never

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forgotten that morning, and its influence has always remained with me.*

This is a noteworthy episode in the record of Canadian letters, and it is plain now for those who will to read it. Needless to say that Charles G. D. Roberts was the author of "Orion" and that it was his first book of poems. Perhaps Lampman's chief delight was that the book was written by a Canadian; the fact gave him confidence in himself and from that day forward his life was occupied with poetry. A literary friendship between the two men followed, and to this friendship was added others until Lampman was assured of a small group of auditors who were filled with like enthusiasms and whom he could count upon for quick response. Some of them were writers, others were men of wide reading and sound taste.

One of the very nearest of these friends was the late Edward William Thomson, a poet and fiction writer of distinction and power. He was a prince of friends whose helpfulness was inexhaustible and whose courage often understayed Lampman's ship when it was in stress of weather. This friendship arose just after the publication of "Among the Millet". Mr. Thomson was the first to write of the merit of the book; he could speak with authority, as he had a sure sense for poetry. His discriminating praise pleased Lampman, and he always found the criticism helpful and the praise stimulat-

*Extract from an unpublished essay.

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ing. The contact with a mind like Mr. Thomson's was specially valuable to him. He found there something that his own mind lacked—a robust quality, knowledge and experience of life, and he found there sympathy that was broadly based on actualities, as sensitive as a woman's, as charitable and as tender. I am certain that Lampman made full use of this friendship and that it was of peculiar influence and comforting effect. Most of the letters he wrote were addressed to this friend, who has generously given them to me, and I shall quote freely from them. They are intimate letters, carelessly written, self-revealing in their lack of literary pose, and, in their moderation, altogether characteristic. In every line one can feel the quality of understanding friendship that called them forth. The value of such a correspondence is evident. The letters arriving from Toronto, Boston and otherwhere had, as he said, an exhilarating and refreshing effect:

> I feel a rekindling of life after I read your letters. Perhaps you yourself will not be able to see why this should be so; but you may take my word for it that it is so and I hope you may have an happy sense of having done a good deed when you have written them.

Mr. Thomson was a discriminating admirer, but when he praised, there was praise of no doubtful quality. Lampman enjoyed it all and endeavoured to discount it to meet his too modest estimation of his own powers:

> I make allowances," he writes, "for a certain bias of disposition which enables you to get out of my verses all the charm there is in them, and a good deal more that per-

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haps isn't in them. It does one good to be roundly praised once in a while, i.e., if one is a sane man and knows himself. It acts like wine—like clear wholesome wine—stimulates and a little intoxicates, but does no harm. I do not often get praise that pleases me. Most of what comes to me is echoed praise and is, therefore, worthless. It has no intoxicating property, and is like the common claret we get from a second rate grocer—stale and unprofitable.

Lampman was thus provided with that intimate circle that is essential for creative effort. The poet invents and creates in the first instance to satisfy an impulse, purely for his own pleasure, and in the second for those minds that have immediate contact with his own; he is making "great verse for a little clan," the little clan of his friends. The public, when he comes to have a public, intrudes and unless he can shut out their importunities, they trouble his genius and affect its development, for the worse not infrequently.

Lampman never worked in loneliness or without appreciation. He might feel that his spirit was parched by routine, but he never felt that other desolating consciousness that no one heeded or comprehended him.

Another sure and certain friend was his brother-in-law, Rev. Dr. Ernest Voorhis, who at the time of his marriage with Archibald's eldest sister was resident in New York, but who afterwards moved to Canada. He proved himself always a noble-hearted friend, a true companion by his scholarship and character.

I am indebted to the diligence of Dr. Voorhis for the information here given as to the ancestry of the

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poet. A full monograph on this subject was compiled by him for the Royal Society of Canada, and will be found in the Transactions of Section II. 1921. The poet's mother was a Gesner, a descendant of a family that was celebrated for its intellectual attainments and its high qualities of character. The Gesner family originated in Switzerland, whence some of the branches moved into southern Germany which probably offered them a larger field and better advantages for the pursuit of their favourite studies. One branch, from which the poet was descended, moved into Holland at an early date. During the past four centuries the family has produced many celebrated scholars and scientists whose labours are recorded in history.

JOHN HENRY GESNER (1681-1745), the progenitor of the American and Canadian branches, when twenty-nine years old left his home in Holland and with his wife Anne Elizabeth and infant daughter Margaret came to London, whence he sailed by ship "Lyon" arriving in New York June 10th, 1710. He settled at Tappan on the Hudson, about thirty miles north of New York. He resided there until his death in 1745, a man of pious life, member of the Lutheran church, and respected by his neighbours. A second child, whom he named John, was born to him in 1724.

His son, JOHN HENRY GESNER (1724-1811), inherited his father's estate, to which he made considerable additions. He lived continuously at Tappan and in 1811

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was buried in the old Gesner burying ground, his grave and that of his wife being marked by tombstones still legible. The site of his house and the family burying ground may still be seen about a mile and a half south-east of Tappan village. In 1744 he married Famitcha Brower, daughter of Adolphus Brower and Jannette Ferdon. Seven sons and two daughters were born to them, the eldest in 1745 and the youngest in 1768. Canadian history is interested in only two of these sons, the twin brothers HENRY and ABRAHAM GESNER.

During the Revolution the brothers, then eighteen years of age, joined the King's Orange rangers, a loyalist corps, raised mainly in Orange county, New York, by Lieut. Bayard. Both boys were with the forces of Sir Henry Clinton in his northern expedition and were present at the storming and taking of Fort Montgomery. After seeing active service in several engagements the Rangers were ordered to Nova Scotia and embarked for Halifax in October 1778. They remained in garrison duty until 1783 and were then disbanded. In consequence of their loyalist sympathies, Henry and Abraham suffered the loss of all their patrimony, in lieu of which the British Government granted Henry 400 acres in the Cornwallis valley, and Abraham a tract of similar area near Annapolis Royal in the Annapolis valley.

COLONEL HENRY GESNER, the great-grandfather of the poet, after receiving his grant of 400 acres of primeval forest, began the life of a pioneer and, before his

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death, had developed his property to a high state of cultivation. In 1786 he married Sarah Pineo, daughter of David and Rebecca West Pineo of Cornwallis. He survived his wife eight years, dying in 1850 at the age of 94 years, and both were buried in the churchyard of the English Church at Cornwallis. His wife's family, the Pineo, or more correctly Pineau, were French Huguenots, descendants of Jacques Pineau, who came to Bristol, Rhode Island, in 1706. After remaining some years in Connecticut they went to Nova Scotia before the American revolution. Elizabeth Sampson, the grandmother of Henry Gesner's wife, was directly descended from Myles Standish and John Alden. Twelve children were born to Henry Gesner and his wife Sarah Pineo, all of whom were baptized in St. John's church, Cornwallis. This present narrative is concerned with the life and adventures of one of the sons, DAVID HENRY GESNER, the grandfather of Archibald Lampman.

He was born at Cornwallis in 1793. When twenty-seven years old he left Nova Scotia for Montreal, where he taught school for two years. He then studied medicine for two years, but not finding either occupation to his liking and being drawn by a love of adventure and a great fondness for nature, he decided to join the ranks of the pioneers who at that time were beginning to migrate from Lower Canada and the Maritime Provinces to Upper Canada. About the year 1825, in company with other pioneers he arrived at Port Talbot on Lake

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Erie. Thence he journeyed a few miles westward and took up land in the township of Orford, County of Kent. The Book of Land Grants in the Archives at Toronto records a grant to David Henry Gesner of 200 acres south on Talbot Road on the shore of Lake Erie, 7th June, 1825. Clearing a small space in the forest Gesner erected a comfortable log house in which he dwelt alone for nearly two years. By incessant labour and perseverance he hewed down the forest, cleared his fields, built himself a comfortable home, planted and developed a fruit farm rivalling in some degree his father's estate at Cornwallis.

Companionship was not far distant, for at Tyrconnel Gesner met and wooed Sarah Stewart, daughter of Captain John Stewart who with his wife and ten children had moved to Tyrconnel from Digby, Nova Scotia, in 1820. The Stewarts were a Scotch family who had emigrated from County Tyrone, Ulster, in the north of Ireland, to Nova Scotia. Captain Stewart had been educated for the Church of England ministry, but had chosen to follow the sea; his wife Sarah was a member of the Culver family who had emigrated from Holland. Their married life covered a period of fifty-two years. He survived his wife but a few months, dying in 1879 at the age of 86, and both were buried in the churchyard of Trinity church, Morpeth, which Gesner in company with other gentlemen had built and maintained. Eight children were born to them, of whom the last surviving

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died in 1915. Of his eight children only two married, his eldest son John and his daughter Susannah Charlotte, mother of the poet.

About the middle of the 18th century three brothers, JOHN, CASPAR, and FREDERICK LAMPMAN, left their native town Hanover, and emigrated with their families to the American colonies coming by way of Holland. The Lampmans in leaving Hanover and coming to America simply transferred themselves from one portion of British territory to another, without change of allegiance to the British Crown.

The youngest of these three brothers, FREDERICK LAMPMAN, the ancestor of Archibald Lampman, was about thirty years old when he arrived in New York in 1750 with his wife Katharine and one or two children. He settled in New Jersey not far from New York and there he lived for thirty-four years. In 1784 when about sixty-five years old he came to Canada and being a U.E. Loyalist was granted 400 acres by the Crown at Stamford, Lincoln County, District of Niagara. Frederick Lampman and all his sons and sons-in-law were strong loyalists. There was no hesitation on their part in siding with the King's adherents. With the exception of a few horses and cattle and some personal effects, which he was able to bring into Canada, all his property was seized by the Americans and he entered the country almost destitute. His family consisted of seven sons and five daughters.

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PETER LAMPMAN, the eldest son of Frederick and great-grandfather of Archibald Lampman was born in Hanover in 1749. He was twenty-seven years old at the beginning of the revolution. In 1777 he married Elizabeth Haynes of an English family which after the war settled as U.E. Loyalists in the township of Newark, District of Nassau. Soon after their marriage Peter was compelled to flee from their home to escape impressment with the American forces and the young couple were separated for about five years. His eldest child Catharine was born during her father's flight. If Elizabeth received any news of her husband during those five years, it must have been a most unusual circumstance. Alone and on foot, hunted by the Americans, always in peril of his life, he travelled up the Hudson valley to the city of Quebec, where he arrived in 1779.

In the spring of 1780 he proceeded west by the St. Lawrence river to the Niagara peninsula where he took up a claim at bend of the Niagara escarpment called St. Anthony's Nose.

From the autumn of 1780 to the spring of 1782 Peter Lampman was busily engaged in preparing his new home in the wilderness, cutting down the forest, and building a log house.

In the spring of 1782, having made sufficient preparation, he set out alone for New York to fetch his wife and child. Although peace had been declared in that year, news was slow in travelling, and his return

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to New York was probably as dangerous as his flight from the town had been. His route this time was by the Mohawk valley through the country of the Five Nations. At some time during the summer of 1782 he found his wife and the little child Catrina then about four years old whom he saw for the first time.

We do not know where they lived for the next nine or ten months, but in the following spring of 1783 Peter returned again to Niagara bringing his wife, Catrina, and an infant son but a few weeks old. It is related that he procured a horse, on which his wife and children rode while he walked by their side. They arrived in Niagara in safety and began life in their forest home where though privations were severe, there was security under the British flag. Peter Lampman's grants were extensive, altogether about 750 acres as recorded in the Land Books of Upper Canada which are preserved in the Archives at Toronto. The estate, which he named Mountain Point, was situated between Thorold and St. Catherine's, and under his care a beautiful fruit farm was developed. Here he lived for fifty-two years. In 1834 he died at the age of eighty-five, having survived his wife fourteen years. They were both interred in the graveyard of the old Lutheran church at Thorold. This historic log church was recently taken down to make room for the new Welland canal.

Ten children were born to Peter Lampman, five sons and five daughters.

His third son, who was also named Peter, the grandfather of the poet, inherited the family estate at Mountain Point. He married Agnes Ann McNeal, daughter of Archibald McNeal who had come to Canada

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from Baltimore. Their family consisted of ten children, of whom seven were sons. The third son, named Archibald, father of the poet, was born in 1822 and died at Ottawa 1895. He was educated at Upper Canada College, graduated Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College, Toronto, 1857, and was ordained in the ministry of the Church of England 1857. He was appointed incumbent of Trinity Church, Morpeth, in 1860 and in May of that year married Susanna Charlotte, daughter of David Henry Gesner.

From these interesting notes it will be seen that the poet's descent was as follows:—

Frederick Lampman 1719-1789 and Katrina	John Hendrick Gesner 1681-1745 and Ann Elizabeth
Peter Lampman 1749-1834 Elizabeth Haynes 1757-1820	John Henry Gesner 1724-1811 Famitcha Brower 1723-1788
Peter Lampman 1787-1870 Agnes Ann McNeal 1795-1879	David Henry Gesner 1793-1879 Sarah Stewart 1802-1878
Archibald Lampman 1822-1895 Susanna Charlotte Gesner 1837-1912	Susanna Charlotte Gesner 1837-1912 Archibald Lampman 1822-1895

Archibald Lampman
1861-1899

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I have given this much space to his forbears because I find the mingling of national strains in Lampman's descent highly interesting and I think the peculiar blend in his temperament may be accounted for by the infusion of Celtic blood with the phlegmatic blood of the Dutch and German stocks. Six national strains met in his personality, French, Dutch, German, Swiss, Scotch and English, but it is noteworthy that both his grandmothers were Highland Scotch. Surely his nature must have been influenced by these Celtic origins. That melancholy which ever and anon settles upon the Highlander visited him and often colored his thoughts, and he had the Celtic shyness which is so often mistaken for pride, and he had also the aversion to material activities. Thrown in upon the more practical qualities of the Dutch and Germans, their power of merely bearing the pressure of life, these more visionary influences made him a sensitive stoic. He often seems less responsive to beauty by intuition than by conscious approach, refining away the elements of lesser value by fine criticism. There is always sensitiveness, but always critical sensitiveness which results in a realism shot through with spiritual loveliness. Such poems as "Heat" and "Among the Timothy" are examples of the resultant. But I must not just now be tempted into literary criticism

It is not my intention to repeat here in detail the incidents of Lampman's life. They are of record in the Memoir which I wrote in 1899, which appears in the complete edition of the poems and may there be read.

He was born at Morpeth, Kent County, Ontario, on the 17th November, 1861. His father was rector of

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Trinity Church there. Afterwards he lived at Perrytown, Gores Landing and Cobourg. At Trinity College school, Port Hope, he was prepared for Trinity College, Toronto, where he entered in September 1879, and graduated in 1882, with second class honors in Classics. He attempted to teach in the High School at Orangeville, but the task was uncongenial and he entered the Civil Service as a temporary clerk in the Post Office Department, Ottawa, on January 16, 1883. On the 23rd of March, following, his position was made permanent. He married in September 1887, Maud, the youngest daughter of Edward Playter, Esq., M.D., of Toronto. In 1892 a daughter was born to them and in 1894 a son who only lived a few months. In June 1898 another son was born. There had been a gradual decline in his health from 1897, and he died on the 10th of February, 1899; on the 11th he was buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa.

To add another portrait to the one I penned twenty-three years ago would be futile. There are memories of course,—"Time he taketh all away, But them he cannot take." Yet the whole memoir, then written with emotion, stands. My aim in this present writing is to treat the life and character in freer mood, and to give, not a different but a more intimate expression of what was a varied, as well as a lofty personality.

The portrait which I have chosen for this book was taken in 1891. It is quite different from his other portraits, and, although it may not be the best, I prefer it to all others. If the sunlight had only given us more of the glow of the eyes, it would have been just so much the better, but here we have the shape of the head and the

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flow of the hair, and a sort of stern, almost obstinate set of the mouth, which are all quite characteristic and are foils to the too great mildness and pensiveness of the other portraits. His character was by no means free from the sternness which the sunlight has preserved for us. Without a blend of that quality he would not have been able to hold out with courage. He had material desires, but they were not longings for riches or ease. When he thought of a happy future it merely took the form of an escape from routine. He wrote in 1895:—

> I intend to stay here in the Civil Service about four years longer until I reach the head of my class. Then by hook or crook I propose to get myself superannuated. If they will do that (and I think they owe it to me) and give me all the advantages that the law allows, I can retire on a pension of $600 or $700. I shall go to some small quiet country place and give myself up to poetry. I can make a few hundreds a year by the pen, and there is no reason why I should not be comfortable and above all—free. It is freedom that I want. I am bound. I am suffocated. If I had the genius of Milton I could do nothing.

In February of the next year, he has made up his mind to put up with conditions as they are:—

> I find myself for the first time in my life approaching a condition of philosophy. In a little while I shall no longer care whether people pay any attention to me or not, whether those I love return my affection or not, whether publishers accept my books, or whether anyone reads them when they are published. When I have actually reached that point I believe I shall be happy. I have already well begun the process of self abnegation. I no longer grumble at the Civil Service, for I have given up for good and all the notion of writing anything large and important. Hereafter I shall be well content to produce such things as the nature of my gift and the circumstances of my life permit.

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> All our troubles in reality proceed from nothing but vanity, if we track them to their source. We form an ideal of ourselves and claim what seems to be due to that ideal. The ideal of myself is entitled to love and approbation from my fellow creatures: but the love and approbation does not appear, and I fret and abuse the constitution of things. To the ideal of myself money and power and practical success are no doubt due, but they do not come, and again I abuse the constitution of things.
>
> It is necessary for every man when he reaches maturity of understanding to take himself carefully to pieces and ascertain with pitiless scientific accuracy just what he is; then he must adjust his attitude to life accordingly and adhere to it. If we would only do that we should suffer infinitely less. That is what I am trying to do now.

It required courage to extract any comfort from such stark philosophy, but the real comfort was in being able to express the immediate feeling; the moment it was expressed it was conquered. It was a relief to write as he did in 1895:—

> I am getting well weary of things. I was so far gone in hypochondria on Saturday last that I had not the spirit to go to my office at all. I went straggling up the Gatineau Road, and spent the whole day and most of the next under the blue sky and the eager sun; and then I began to perceive that there were actually trees and grass and beautifully loitering clouds in the tender fields of heaven; I got to see at last that it was really June; and that perhaps I was alive after all.

His letters show a constant stress of this strong feeling; but the happiness he undoubtedly had in living manifested itself indirectly. His letters are filled with joyous domestic items, his love of children and animals, his thankfulness for old and new friends, glad acknowledgment for kindnesses, his admiration for fine writing

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of all kinds, and his solace in the classics, particularly in the Greek language. In June, 1894, he writes:—

> I have taken to reading Greek lately and have been plodding through some plays of Euripides—intend to read some of Sophocles and Aeschylus next. There never was and never will be another language like the Greek. It is worth while giving two or three years of ones life even to get a moderate knowledge of it. Those who possess an intimate and discerning knowledge of Greek literature have an enormous advantage over all other people. They survey modern literature from a certain solid standpoint of breadth and beauty, and, if they have the creative gift, are able to use the material in modern life, and cast it into new forms, without being disordered and carried astray by modern ill-regulated fads and crazes.

He thought the greatest poets those who were men of affairs as well as poets, and had least admiration for those who were only poets. I have so far quoted from the letters; the next quotation written by Lampman is taken from the column called "At The Mermaid Inn," which ran for a year and a few months, until the summer of 1893 in the Saturday issue of the Toronto *Globe*. Wilfrid Campbell, Lampman and I wrote the contents. I suggested the title and wrote the motto credited to an "Old Play" in five minutes one night in Lampman's study in his house on Florence street:

> It is a noticeable fact that the greatest poets, those few who are eminent above all others for dignity and majesty of tone, have been men of affairs before they were poets, and that those men who have been poets only have belonged, however illustrious, to the second class. Æschylus was a soldier and an active patriot before he was a poet. The speech that came naturally to his tongue was not the mere utterance of the brilliant playwright. Active participation in great national efforts and the experience of battle and vic-

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tory were necessary to awaken and confirm in the poet of Agamemnon that mood and note of rugged, sustained sublimity. The mind of Dante, trained in the great cares of statecraft, studying and experiencing the vicissitudes of an active and dangerous time, became capable of the Divina Comedia. Our own Milton could never have written Paradise Lost had he not first been the friend and assistant of Cromwell and concerned in the mighty cares and the proud cause of the Commonwealth. The mood of soul that he learned in those full years of thought and labor and intense experience is the mood of Paradise Lost—grand, ingenuous, austere. If the youth of Byron could have been bred in the hardening atmosphere of great affairs instead of being given over to foppery and dissipation, if the Greek revolution had called him earlier, or if he had lived longer and passed through periods of strenuous deeds and important purposes, he might have given to England a poet more splendidly fruitful, if not so mighty of tongue as Milton.

There is some self-criticism here for he undervalued his critical powers and his practical endowments, probably because he disliked exercising them. He had an increasing interest in world politics and would express himself on questions relating to human conduct with wisdom and sometimes with daring.

The following extract contains his views on the social position of women:—

Of the many inspiring phenomena that make this teeming age wonderful and noteworthy, the most hopeful and the most significant is the change which is so rapidly taking place in the social position of women. The sentimentalist of the old school looks askance, and pictures to himself with disgust and dread the "masculine" woman of the future. The rest of us need have no fear. Most of the frivolity, the vice, the sordid brutality that have characterised too much of human society in the past have been

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due to the condition of comparative social inferiority in which women have been forced to live. Give them perfect independence, place them upon an exactly even footing with men in all the activities and responsibilities of life, and a result for good will be attained which it is almost beyond the power of the imagination to picture. In the first place the effect upon the institution of marriage will be in the highest degree wholesome and beautiful. The degrading necessity for marriage, which is one of the wretchedest curses of society as we see it, will be removed. The woman will marry from choice, and the intellectual and moral training derived from her improved condition will enable her to choose rightly. The man will no longer choose a wife; it will be the woman who will choose her husband. Who can follow out in all their many branches the beneficent results of this one gain alone. The high standard of excellence which the woman will certainly look to in making her choice, cannot but ensure the elimination or repression of a great part of the fool and the brute that is in men. Then as to those vices and dreadful degradations which many of us pass over in ashamed silence when we speak of the conditions of life, what will the effect be upon them? Assuredly it will be great. Women, no longer weak and dependent, no longer kept in an emotional atmosphere of frivolity and sentimental irresponsibility, but strong, active and self-reliant as men, will not be subject or exposed to the same temptations, and above all they will not be at the mercy of men. When the moral and intellectual emancipation of women is fully effected many a cloud will be lifted from human life, and no sensible man will believe that the sex will have sacrificed one whit of that grace and beauty which we think to be its chiefest charm; rather there will be added to these a power, a beneficence, a dignity which are only the exception now.

Like Elia, "Lampman was temperate in his meals and diversions," but, unlike Elia, he always kept a little on the other side of abstemiousness. There is a pas-

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sage in one of his letters describing with all vehemence his disgust at the taste of rye whiskey. "By the doctor's direction, I am drinking whiskey and water at intervals of three hours. I had swallowed rye before, but never realized till now what a crude, soulless, beastly unendurable drink it is. Holland's gin, vile as it is, I think preferable. How did man ever get it into his head to manufacture and absorb so hideous, so brutish a liquid?" Wine was a beneficence, but it was a rare and precious experience, too precious to be celebrated, too rare to leave a trace on the imagination.—"Only in the use of the Indian weed he might be thought a little excessive." He thus whimsically defends the habit:—

> I admit that it injures the digestion, that it weakens the will power, that it causes a man to waste valuable time that might be more meritoriously employed in boxing or doing hurt to his fellow-creatures, and then I adjust myself comfortably and fill another pipe.
>
> I find tobacco very conducive to prolonged meditation. It allays the disturbance that the mind is in, owing to the competition of too many subjects of thought. Out of the condition almost approaching reverie, which it produces, the subject which is actually most momentous gradually emerges; and at the end of a little time we find ourselves pursuing some single line of steady and effective thought. This result, as it seems to me, is not wholly due to the influence of tobacco as a stimulant, but is largely caused by the sort of gentle occupation that the act of smoking affords—an occupation not pronounced enough to draw the mind's attention, yet sufficiently an occupation to keep the nerves at rest. . . . . I have sometimes obtained a similar result from fishing—especially on a tepid and motionless summer day and in waters, where, as I subsequently ascertained, there were hardly any fish.

As the delusion of fishing was infrequent, I think I may

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say that smoking and pedestrianism were his chief aids to composition. His pipes were many, but his favourite pipes few and of strange aspect, cherished not for their beauty, but for their "sweetness," a word, misapplied in this connection, that conveyed the idea of special wealth of contentment. He smoked a celebrated Montreal brand "Brahadi's" until at last it shared his affection with H. B. Co. mixture. His pedestrianism was routine, from his home to his office, forth and back, back and forth, cage-like peripatetics, but many lines and whole stanzas and sonnets were invented and perfected in that treadmill. This monotony of movement, no doubt, allayed the competition of too many subjects of thought. This routine walking was something to the good, but the real joy of walking was in the woods and fields or on the way there. On these expeditions he gained his knowledge of nature by sympathetic observation and stored his impressions for future refining or transmutation. The following is a specimen of the material of nature poetry gathered in this way and also one example of a delicate prose style which he practised too seldom:—

> April and May are the months of wood flowers; June the season of blossoming in the inner recesses of the forest; August the time of perfume and color in meadow and field. He who journeys homeward from the woods on one of these quiet, murmurous April evenings, when the light still lingers in the clear, greenish west, bears with him a handful of the tenderest and most delicate of all our flowers. Here are the hepatica, white, violet-blue or tenderest pink, plucked with the last year's rusted leaves; the adder-tongue, drawn cool out of the moist earth, with purple-spotted leaf-blades and white, slender root stem, curling joyously back its yellow petals under the noonday sun;

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the little striped blossom of the frail spring beauty; the dicentia or squirrel corn, with its pink-stemmed wreaths of tremulous creamy drops, springing from the midst of an abundance of delicate and intricate leafage; most exquisite of all, the bloodroot's clear waxen bloom, set between its half-opened irregular grey leaves. He will have also perhaps a bud or two, just beginning to open, of the splendid white-winged trillium, or some of the blue cohosh, that mystic-looking plant with its strange and dusky but very beautiful blossoms. By the way, I should think that this last plant would be an inexhaustible treasure to the decorative artist. I know of no plant in bloom which has so peculiar and mysterious a hue and shape. When June comes we shall get the rare and beautiful lady's slippers out of the deep wet woods, and many another surprising blossom far hidden and seldom sought; but for the present let us be content with the brave little first-comers, the happy denizens of the less secluded wilderness. These, as with the race of poets, are indeed the fairest and freshest of all.

No portrait of Lampman would be complete without the lines of gaiety it should contain. There are, maybe, high poets without a sense of humour, but he was not one. He could be as grave as a dull function required, and in his ordinary relations he seemed a trifle preoccupied—well,—a bit remote, and when he gave his full attention one recognized it, as if his mind had come from a far country, roused up from contemplation there; and it would seem just for a moment, as he looked at you, that he was about to give you a message from that far strange country. But no matter what was his degree of gravity or shyness or preoccupation, when he laughed one was convinced that he was simply hiding behind that manner to surprise the humour of a situation. The laugh was really larger than any vocal expression of his sober side; there was all the enjoy-

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ment of the physical in it. He had delight in the incongruous and absurd, and rejoiced in the crystals of fun which came to him in the grist of everyday official correspondence. He would bring to me when he discovered them these artless efforts of unknown correspondents to express their complaints or desires.

He was capable of laughing at himself occasionally and of making fun of his own inveterate ideality and his faculty of extracting beauty from common things. This sonnet called "Reality" is an example:—

I stand at noon upon the heated flags
At the bleached crossing of two streets, and dream
With brain scarce conscious now the hurrying stream
Of noonday passengers is done. Two hags
Stand at an open doorway piled with bags
And jabber hideously. Just at their feet
A small, half-naked child screams in the street,
A blind man yonder, a mere hunch of rags,
Keeps the scant shadow of the eaves, and scowls,
Counting his coppers. Through the open glare
Thunders an empty wagon, from whose trail
A lean dog shoots into the startled square,
Wildly revolves and soothes his hapless tail,
Piercing the noon with intermittent howls.

Here we have the bare, sordid facts of life with no relief or mitigation. The artistry is there and the keen observation, but no hope.

He had a gift, too, of knocking off amusing impromptu stanzas hot on the occasion.

He could be very deeply impressed by music, but Brahms was a composer he did not appreciate, even the lovely Sonata for Piano and Violin in G was a closed book to him.—

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When you hear this Sonata of Brahms
Go immediately down on your hams
And utter a couple of damns
Long drawn in the manner of psalms!

I used to argue with him about those lovely bird-tunes in the sonata and the rhythmic life that seems so like the heart-beat of natural things. But there is no use arguing about music; "Pour not forth words where there is a musician;" certain music he could enjoy; about other music he would write satirical quatrains.

There are amusing flashes in his letters, and highly coloured exaggerations. In February, 1895, he wrote:—

"I have been furnishing a winter carnival for two hundred billions of grippe bacteria, and they have eaten me out of house and home. I feel like an old worm-eaten cheese, or a dry cod-fish, which has hung for ten years over the door of a rural grocery shop. I am reminded of Herod Agrippa in the New Testament, you remember, who died eaten of worms. I guess it was only grippe germs and they called him agrippa on that account." He signed this letter: Archimbaldus Agrippa.

That is an example of the sudden improvisations which he threw off in happy mood. He indulged in the humorous writers, but the wits were not so congenial. Smollett was preferred over Sterne, Dickens over Thackeray, and he valued the humour of George Eliot's characters above all the subtle wit of George Meredith's.

Writing in April, 1894, of some early work of his which had come under criticism for its derivation from Keats, he said "The Keats at the beginning of the poem was very natural, for I could not write anything at that time without writing Keats. I am only just now

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getting quite clear of the spell of that marvellous person and it has taken me ten years to do it. Keats has always had such a fascination for me and has so permeated my whole mental outfit, that I have an idea that he has found a sort of faint reincarnation in me." This is merely a tribute to the fecund nature of the work of Keats, who by his influence on modern poetry has had many reincarnations and is to have many more. It may be noted that these poets were both children of autumn. Keats was born within one day of November, and Lampman on the 17th of that month. They both died in February. This synchrony of their birth and death months is interesting only to those whose minds are hospitable to such trifles. They may also find room in their memories for the fact and its over-quaint interpretation that at Lampman's funeral on that bitter February day, nature that he had so loved was represented there as a mourner by one of the least of her creatures, a church mouse, that moved about the coffin-head for certain moments, and circled slow with cold under the bier, animated marvellously amid the frozen and foodless desert of the Cathedral to creep forth, to pay tribute and to disappear, unconscious of its office.

The Keats influence on Lampman is at its best in the ever present desire to perfect the atmosphere of the poem, to translate the feeling for nature and life experienced keenly into correspondencies in the mind by devices of imagery, of verbal beauty and of cadence. These new flowers from the genius of Keats are not slavish imitations. They are kindred inspiration, of like felicity, without cunning or premeditation. They derive from the early marvellous inventions of "Endymion" rather

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than from the later perfections of the Odes. The sound arises in such lines as, "How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep around their axle!" And the echo comes to us, "The grasshoppers spin into mine ear, A small innumerable sound." There is nothing here of the Rossettian search for "stunning words" for poetry or even the desire for *le mot juste*. It is the Shakespearean concept of a humbler art which may be elevated to the art of poetry.—"This is an art, Which does mend nature, change it rather, but, The art itself is nature." The influence of Keats was succeeded by other influences less powerful and traceable less clearly in his workmanship. Wordsworth and Arnold both exercised some influence, and latest in his life there is a curious harking back to Tennyson. Wordsworth was less of an influence than might be expected when we consider how much the master poet was concerned with nature. Nature set up moral reactions in Wordsworth's mind, more definite than any effects that can be noticed in Lampman. They were as one in speaking of nature as a refuge, but the greater poet used the shelter to recreate his interest in life, and not as a nook for reverie. Their methods of describing nature seem to me essentially different. Wordsworth's descriptions are often such pictures as were painted by the landscapists of his day, in truth he may have been influenced by them. Glorious they are with their piled up colour and form, but there is no suggestion there of anything more than the thing seen. By comparison Lampman was an impressionist, he was more concerned with the sensation of a view or an action than with ideas that might be derived from it. Lampman did not attempt the lofty address to nature,

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"Ye breezes and soft airs—ye waves—ye groves"; but one might expect influences and correspondencies in the sonnets that one does not find. Compare Lampman's sonnet "Winter Evening", that Robert Louis Stevenson admired, with any of Wordsworth's nature sonnets, and the difference of method becomes plain. I am almost certain in fact that Lampman was influenced more strongly as a sonneteer by Rossetti than by Wordsworth, an influence exerted rather in a certain clinching force and final stroke than in choice of subject or imagery. Arnold he valued supremely. In his opinion "It is not the brilliancy, the versatility, the fecundity or the ingenuity of a poet that makes him 'great'; it is the plane upon which his imagination moves, the height from which he looks down, the magnitude of his ideas." Holding this opinion he could write of Arnold:—

> We are apt almost to pass by a poet who in this last age occupies the clearest and noblest plane of all. I mean Matthew Arnold. Arnold is not so triumphantly the poet as Tennyson, nor is he so various or so clever as Browning, but he looks from a grander height than either, his imagination has its natural abode in a diviner atmosphere. The whole range of life, time and eternity, the mysteries and beauties of existence and its deepest spiritual problems are continually present to his mind. In his genius is that rare combination of philosophy and the poetic impulse in the highest degree, which has given us our few solitary poets. The only test by which we can measure the greatness of a verse writer is the quality of the effect which he produces upon the mind of the reader. He who has been reading Browning till his head spins with the multitude of subtleties and splendid tours de force, or he who is even weary, if such a thing may be, of the rounded perfections of Tennyson, betakes himself to Matthew Arnold, and then he seems to have reached the hills. With a mind

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> blown clear as by the free wind of heaven he surveys the extent of life. He passes through an atmosphere where only the noblest emotions, life, beauty and thought possess him. He becomes gentle and majestic as the mind of the master who commands him. I believe that the time will come when Matthew Arnold will be accounted the greatest poet of his generation, and one of the three or four noblest that England has produced.

With this critical aid one can distinguish the influence of Arnold in choice of subject and in the plain resolve to deal "with the noblest emotions of life, beauty and thought."

There are certain years in the life of every poet when he has greatest delight in creation, and these years for Lampman lay between 1883 and 1887. During those years he fixed his style and employed it upon a new landscape in a sort of half-leisure that enabled him to observe and reflect in almost untroubled joy. His intimates could feel in those years that he was absorbed in poetry. "Among the Timothy" was written in 1885; "Between the Rapids" in 1886; "The Frogs" in May, and "Heat" in July of 1887. These are typical poems and his subsequent work did not vary in manner, but developed with wider observation of life and nature.

An attempt to fasten on our poet any system of philosophy or any argument for the gloomy outlook on modern life will be unsuccessful. Apart from the joy of living and dreaming, and the pure excitement of transmitting his delight in the drama of nature there is happily no system of thought that can be detached and nominated. The characteristic Lampman is in such a poem as "The Sweetness of Life", and in such phrases as "Thou dream'st and art strangely happy, But thou

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canst not answer why." and "O Life! O Life! I kept saying, And the very word seemed sweet." This is the pure Mozartian strain, untroubled by any desire for analysis, without perplexity or inward brooding, but yet sufficient unto itself, like a melody that tells us nothing, but that is more significant than an adage or an aphorism. Lampman is full of touches that end in the sufficiencies of dreaming and of the loss of personal identity in thought, but when we ask what dreams, what thought, he cannot answer. While this may be the characteristic Lampman, this melting away into nature that has no thought but only vibration, it would be unjust to let the criticism rest there. If he were to leave us without ideals, the poet would indeed be limited, no matter how great the beauty he had gathered up with which to seed the world. And in many of his poems he has told us what his thought was, what was the substance of his vision. The trance was one thing; the interpretation was another; whatever was the dream, "he awoke and found it truth." This habit of reverie was fostered by his environment. He was conscious that the Canadian scene was not stimulative to the production of poetry, that its votaries had to depend too greatly on their native endowment without aid from the excitements that arise in a literary army on the march or in camp. He expressed it very well:—

> Those who do accomplish anything in literature in this country have, at any rate, the grim satisfaction of knowing that if it is not what they might have done under more favourable circumstances, it is at least the product of sheer natural talent. The Canadian litterateur must depend solely upon himself and nature. He is almost without the exhilaration of lively and frequent literary intercourse—that force and

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variety of stimulus which counts for so much in the fructification of ideas. The human mind is like a plant, it blossoms in order to be fertilised, and to bear seed must come into actual contact with the mental dispersion of others. Of this natural assistance the Canadian writer gets the least possible, and, if out of the poverty of his opportunities he accomplishes something, let him not be blamed for being, perhaps, a little boastful and inclined to rate himself at a little more than his actual worth.

We are, no doubt, apt to lay too great a stress on the seeming quietude of such lives as Lampman's. The day's routine is invariable, broken in upon by a little unadventurous travel, a new acquaintance or two, a change of domicile; these things follow on with a slow persistence till the man is abraded by the monotony of every day fact and there appears to be no opportunity for the life of poetry. That is merely "How it strikes a contemporary." The life of poetry is in the imagination, there lies the ground of true adventure and though the poet's imagination may be starved and parched by the lack of variety in life, he persists nevertheless to make poetry out of its dust and ashes, out of its lets and hindrances and even greatest poetry out of the small frets and sorrows that he shares with all mankind.

There are evidences in the poems and the letters of spiritual adventures and perturbations that were not apparent even to the closest companion. In February of 1894 we find him writing, "I become more sensitive, more excitable, more nervously alive with every year, but another thing must be said, you used to credit me with a certain peaceful serenity of thought and vision—if I had it, it is dying out—I am becoming morbid, subject to dreadful moods and hypochondria." In the next

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month he is saying "I suppose I am passing through some spiritual revolution; in fact I know I am; and some things have caused me unusual agonies. But it is a good thing after all to be able to feel, to find that one is human and not a mere leather thing of common use and convention." In letters of the two next years the stress of feeling is apparent, "I have gone through so much inward trouble that it has somewhat broken me and I do not take wing, so to speak, very readily." "To tell the truth I have been under such a heavy strain of feeling during the last year or two that I have come to look on the matter of publishing and fame, etc., as of very little importance at all." These quotations will prove the existence but not the plot of an intense personal drama. In January, 1897, it tends to disappear and he writes "There has followed an unusual feeling of peace, peace that was not bright, but rather leaden-hued with sorrow; but it was peace, and I seemed to feel an immense rest after the years of fever and torture I had been through. Then a delightful sense of power, very likely a purely fictitious sense, got hold of me, and I wrote quite a lot of poems, sitting at them, evening after evening, for ten days or so, more than I ever wrote in the same space of time before." When he wrote these words he had only two years of life left and they were two years of a fight for life, not two years of health and happy devotion to work. The sense of creative power which he writes of doubtfully was genuine enough, but it was undermined by physical weakness, and every desire to create was met by a prohibition of all mental effort. But in spite of these things the passion persisted to the end, and his note book of 1898 bears

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traces of many things attempted, and a few beautiful things accomplished. The last lines he wrote, the sonnet "Winter Uplands", which he finished on January 29, 1899, shows no diminution of power; the tonic feeling of frost, the wonderful nearness of winter stars, the cold friendliness of the moon, the old delight in human activity and the shadow of beauty thrown upon the soul, —these are intensely realized by the man who was so very near the end of all sensation. The critical power was also awake and as watchful as ever. He first wrote the last two lines—

> Though the heart plays us false and life be bare,
> The truth of Beauty haunts us everywhere.

But he substituted the realistic thirteenth line,—

> The crunching snowshoes and the stinging air.

And in the approved fourteenth he rounded the sonnet with a touch of the eternal loveliness of nature,—

> Silence, frost and beauty everywhere.

Below the final draft of the sonnet he pencilled, in his beautiful Greek script, line 360 of the XIX Book of the Odyssey.—

> For men quickly age in evil fortune.

Before I touch upon the ideals that support and vivify the poems, I would quote an utterance of Lampman's which conveys a faith that he held most firmly and which in truth actuated his thinking and influenced his outlook on human affairs.—

> Some one has said that life is one long disease, and this world nothing but a gigantic hospital, and Heine added that the great doctor is death. This is one of those terrible

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sayings that may be uttered either by the egotist who has pursued life's pleasures to the utmost, and in the end found nothing but emptiness and spiritual annihilation, or by the philosopher who has sat all his life long with a raw and sensitive soul in the midst of the concourse of men, and brooded upon the desperate obliquity of human institutions and the hopeless ineptitude of human character, the vileness and the instability of the average and the hideous blackness of the worst.

Then as a contrast to this gloomy view of things he formulated his own belief in a new hope for the vexed human spirit.—

But, patience! Even in a time when these things are becoming most apparent to us may we not perceive the dawning of a new hope? Have we not already noted the beginning and spreading of a new conception of the higher life —a conception which has not yet reached the masses of mankind, but we certainly hope may do so eventually, though not in our day? This conception is the child of science, reinforced by the poetry that is inherent in the facts of the universe and all existence. Thus reinforced, the conception is a religious one. It is independent of the ancient creeds, for it does not trust for its effects to any system of post-mortem rewards and punishments. It is different from the old Stoic virtue of the philosophers, which at bottom was merely prudence, a utilitarian quality. This modern conception is not a materialistic one, although at first it may seem so; it is, as I have said, poetic and intrinsically religious. It comes to those whom the new knowledge has made acquainted with the vast facts and secrets of life, arming them with a breadth and majesty of vision which withers away from the soul the greeds and lusts and meannesses of the old, narrow and ignorant humanity. The small ambitions and petty passions of this world seem infinitesimal indeed to him who once enters into the new conception and lives, as it were, in the very presence of eternity. As yet this new spiritual force only acts upon the few,

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> for it is a modern thing, but its growth is sure. Spreading downward, with the steady extension and dissemination of culture, from mass to mass, it may in the end work its way into the mental character and spiritual habit of all mankind. Then, indeed, the world will become less and less a hospital, and the old cankerous maladies gradually decline and disappear.

This outlook on life and the universe founded upon science is of high vision, nobler and surer than the vision which led to the writing of "The Land of Pallas," a poem which the reader will not find in this book. That poem is a tribute to the tenderness of the poet's heart and to its sensitive revolt against the cruelties and crimes of our society, but the dream-pastoral society which he imaginatively substituted for the present is as passionless as a wall painting by Puvis de Chavannes. An Utopia where physical pain and mental struggle are non-existent and where all human effort is slowed down to gathering the fruits of perfection may be momentarily attractive as a contrast to our perilous existence but cannot serve the ambitious heart as a goal or the eager mind as a logical resting place. This poem is a trace of the thinking in which Lampman indulged in 1894-5, when he belonged to a group of friends who were playing lightly with socialistic ideas which he translated into poetry.

The view of life through the lens of science will not enable us to reconstruct society, but, as Lampman felt, it will give us breadth and majesty of vision and will in the end alter our mental and moral relations. This is the creed that takes form in the lines of "Alcyone" in which life is held to be negative unless

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the spirit can be— "Something radiant and august as night, Something wide as space."

It is present in many poems where the cosmic feeling transcends the restricted idea of our planet as the sole reason for the existence of the universe, and of our destiny, as a formalized system of "post-mortem rewards and punishments": in such a poem as "The Clearer Self", where life is only thought to be actual if one has proved:— "What greatness there can be in man, Above the measured and the known." and in that enigmatic poem "To the Prophetic Soul" where there is a contrast between the materialistic "bustlers at the gate of now or yesterday", and those who have vision of the large and the true. The idea is developed with exceeding beauty in the three sonnets: "The Largest Life". The strangeness of the soul and its part in "The dark march of Human Destiny" is cleared and lightened by its community with the universal creative forces of beauty and of love, and we are called upon to "address our spirits to the height and attune them to the valiant whole". The negative side of this scientific creed is woven into the poem "The City of the End of Things"; it shows the result of mechanistic ideals and the worship of the material. This extraordinary poem is ruthless in its implication. If humanity deserts the spiritual and ceases to look beyond the round of this little foothold of ours into space, into infinity, its doom is slow and certain. Developed in pride, "The City of the End of Things" comes to be inhabited by a race of figures who "obey a hideous routine", clanking and mechanical, they are not of flesh and bone. Of the prodigious race who fashioned them, four only remain;

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three are still masters of the mechanism; they disappear and silence falls on the soulless, mindless energy. But the fourth, "the grim idiot at the gate. Is deathless and eternal there",—a brain and nervous organization adapted to high destinies but ruined, the nadir of personality, a human body without a soul. The poem is powerful, dramatic, and ruthless. I do not think Lampman had read "Erehwon"; Capek and his play R.U.R. came after his day; but neither of these developments of the theme are so concentrated in sardonic bitterness or so unrelieved of hope. This cosmic feeling, this sense of awe is persistent throughout the poems and often we find in his faithful and minute dealings with nature, that the admiration for any special beauty leads into a wider and more general beauty. The wood-violet holds, "in its twisted face, the heart of all the perfumes of the wood".—A few pine trees "unfurl a nobler influence".—"Time and all the pine groves of the world" enfold his spirit.—"The wind, the world-old rhapsodist" reminds him of the mysterious spirit that calls to human hearts "until we dream ourselves immortal and are still".— The voices of earth awaken within his heart "thoughts bedded there empearled—Before the birth and making of the world."

These ideals are not only present in the aphoristic sayings about humanity and its passions, they permeate the poems which are purely descriptions of nature. The life of nature is as varied and complex as the life of the spirit, and it is for this reason that man finds in nature infinite correspondencies with his spiritual states. He finds over against his perturbed and ecstatic existence another activity to which he lends emotion and from which he

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borrows the most telling images for his own inner experience. As each desire dominates the life and fills it full, it can be compared with no other feeling, but it can be compared with the wind on the ocean or the consuming fire in the tree or the ruthless force of water, turbulent and unconfined. By this constant reference to nature since the world began the poets have lent so much to nature that it seems now to have an emotional existence of its own. Amiel said "A landscape is a state of the soul", and in the apprehension of some such truth lies the sole excuse for poetry in which nature is described; it is only tolerable if it brings with the vision of the world some harmony of the spirit:— "Entering again into the eternal mood, In which the world was made", as Lampman himself has it. His work abounds in successful poems of this kind wherein there is perfect fusion of the observed fact, the imagined epithet and the appropriate music. As we have read, he thought it his special *métier* and trod that domain with assured freedom, being a lord of that country. When the book is before the reader there is no need to choose examples. The firm, masterly tone is captured in that early poem, "April", (May, 1884,) and is maintained with but slight faltering till the last.

The sonnets are filled with absolute impressions of the scene and the hour, vignettes of pure colour and pure music, painted and composed with fidelity to fact and interfused with that state of the soul which conditioned the landscape. In perfection the majority of these sonnets take their place with the best in English literature, and bring a new train of beauties into the catalogue, beauties of our own fields and forests, cul-

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tured and familiar, untamed and remote. Coleridge said "In poetry it is the blending of passion with order that constitutes perfection," and how frequently have we in these sonnets that blend of pure passion for the thing seen with consummate order and progression. No beauty is sacrificed to confusion, there is nothing approximate; everything is distinct, alive and surrounded with air. We can gather from these technical perfections what Lampman would have thought of *vers libre* in its present-day forms and of the claims that are made for it as a new mode of expression, as a door of escape from the prison of old verse modes into the freedom of the fields and the sunlight. There is a passage in one of his letters that deals with a subject that was not so pressing in his day. "The Black Riders," by Stephen Crane, came in his way and he did "not like the author at all. Is he not simply a very degenerate development of the spasmodic school? It seems to me that it would be easy to write that sort of thing." And a few days after, on March 23, 1896, he gives a specimen of that "sort of thing":—

There was once a man
He sat in a world of things that seemed to be shadows
Some of them radiantly beautiful,
Yet with a certain striving
Because they saw a light,
Not theirs, but something they desired unspeakably to attain,
Others bitter and foul,
Yet also with a certain perversity,
Because they saw a gloom
A gloom that drove them to madness
And the man rose from among the shadows and shouted
Tearing open his heart;

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"Lo! I will be myself,
I will utter myself."
And one of the radiant ones turned to him and whispered:
"Friend! It is probably fated that thou shouldst be thyself,
But is it worth while to utter thyself
If thyself be an unseemly thing?"

But if one wishes to be convinced that there is a true power in free treatment of rhythm and therefore a place in art for such experiments, let him read "Personality", a poem in which Lampman proved that he could be free of rhyme and stanza form and yet create perfection.

While the greater number of the poems may be classified under three or four general titles, there are a few which seem worthy of special mention by reason of some unusual quality, for instance, "War", "The Moon Path", "The Wood-Cutter's Hut", and "Between the Rapids". The last-mentioned poem, I remember, came in for special praise in an early notice of "Among the Millet" in *The Spectator*, January 12, 1889. The writer compared it with Clough's poem, "Ite domum saturae, venit Hesperus", with discrimination, I think. The feeling of regret pervades both poems, a regret for happiness that was not to be. The reality and beauty of Lampman's Canadian scene is equal to the beauty and reality of Clough's Swiss landscape. "Between the Rapids" was written in June, 1886, when the novelty of the northern scenery was fully upon him and when he had experienced his first canoe voyage. The actual scene is on the River Lievre, near the Iroquois Farm; another record of that time and place is "Morning on the Lievre" and the sonnet "A Dawn on the Lievre". Not many poems in the language are so filled with the

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feeling that may be called native, in which the human emotions are so closely woven with the incidents and the landscape that they seem all of a piece. There is a touch of the romance of the old voyageurs in the poem, as if the heart uttering itself had descended from the *coureur de bois* and had been reared in a tradition of primeval loneliness. There is something of the same quality with less emotion in "The Wood-Cutter's Hut", where "The animal man in his warmth and vigor" is set perfectly once for all in his natural surroundings. The absence of intellectuality from the poem is remarkable, the individual seems no higher in the scale of being than the bear that prowls around his hut; he cleans his rifle and fells his pine tree by instinct, and when he leaves the forest it is but the thoughtless migration of one of its denizens. Of a different quality is the fanciful "Moon Path" and the resounding poem "War". These poems and others are invented, one might say, with a certain artificiality, but written with proved skill; there are certain sonnets with the like genesis—such as "Dead Cities" and "Thamyris". But admirable as much of this work is, including the few ballads and the poems of light fancy or dark musings on happy or sorrowful personal incidents, the true heart of this poet lies in his marvellous interpretations of nature and the breadth and serenity of his outlook through nature upon human life and destiny.

The nature and the life he saw was the Canadian scene and it may well be said of him as was said long ago of Theocritus "His Muse is the Muse of his native land."

—DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

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LYRICS OF EARTH

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April

PALE season, watcher in unvexed suspense,
Still priestess of the patient middle day,
Betwixt wild March's humored petulance
And the warm wooing of green kirtled May,
Maid month of sunny peace and sober gray,
Weaver of flowers in sunward glades that ring
With murmur of libation to the spring;

As memory of pain, all past, is peace,
And joy, dream-tasted, hath the deepest cheer,
So art thou sweetest of all months that lease
The twelve short spaces of the flying year.
The bloomless days are dead, and frozen fear
No more for many moons shall vex the earth,
Dreaming of summer and fruit-laden mirth.

The gray song-sparrows full of spring have sung
Their clear thin silvery tunes in leafless trees;
The robin hops, and whistles, and among
The silver-tasselled poplars the brown bees
Murmur faint dreams of summer harvestries;
The creamy sun at even scatters down
A gold-green mist across the murmuring town.

By the slow streams the frogs all day and night
Dream without thought of pain or heed of ill,
Watching the long warm silent hours take flight,
And ever with soft throats that pulse and thrill,
From the pale-weeded shallows trill and trill,
Tremulous sweet voices, flute-like, answering
One to another glorying in the spring.

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APRIL

All day across the ever-cloven soil,
Strong horses labour, steaming in the sun,
Down the long furrows with slow straining toil,
Turning the brown clean layers; and one by one
The crows gloom over them till daylight done
Finds them asleep somewhere in duskèd lines
Beyond the wheatlands in the northern pines.

The old year's cloaking of brown leaves, that bind
The forest floor-ways, plated close and true—
The last love's labour of the autumn wind—
Is broken with curled flower buds white and blue
In all the matted hollows, and speared through
With thousand serpent-spotted blades up-sprung,
Yet bloomless, of the slender adder-tongue.

In the warm noon the south wind creeps and cools,
Where the red-budded stems of maples throw
Still tangled etchings on the amber pools,
Quite silent now, forgetful of the slow
Drip of the taps, the troughs, and trampled snow,
The keen March mornings, and the silvering rime
And mirthful labour of the sugar prime.

Ah, I have wandered with unwearied feet,
All the long sweetness of an April day,
Lulled with cool murmurs and the drowsy beat
Of partridge wings in secret thickets gray,
The marriage hymns of all the birds at play,
The faces of sweet flowers, and easeful dreams
Beside slow reaches of frog-haunted streams;

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Wandered with happy feet, and quite forgot
The shallow toil, the strife against the grain,
Near souls, that hear us call, but answer not,
The loneliness, perplexity and pain,
And high thoughts cankered with an earthly stain;
And then, the long draught emptied to the lees,
I turn me homeward in slow-pacing ease,

Cleaving the cedar shadows and the thin
Mist of gray gnats that cloud the river shore,
Sweet evening choruses, that dance and spin
Soft tangles in the sunset; and once more
The city smites me with its dissonant roar.
To its hot heart I pass, untroubled yet,
Fed with calm hope, without desire or fret.

So to the year's first altar step I bring
Gifts of meek song, and make my spirit free
With the blind working of unanxious spring,
Careless with her, whether the days that flee
Pale drouth or golden-fruited plenty see,
So that we toil, brothers, without distress,
In calm-eyed peace and godlike blamelessness.

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April in the Hills

TO-DAY the world is wide and fair
With sunny fields of lucid air,
And waters dancing everywhere;
The snow is almost gone;
The noon is builded high with light,
And over heaven's liquid height,
In steady fleets serene and white,
The happy clouds go on.

The channels run, the bare earth steams,
And every hollow rings and gleams
With jetting falls and dashing streams;
The rivers burst and fill;
The fields are full of little lakes,
And when the romping wind awakes
The water ruffles blue and shakes,
And the pines roar on the hill.

The crows go by, a noisy throng;
About the meadows all day long
The shore-lark drops his brittle song;
And up the leafless tree
The nut-hatch runs, and nods, and clings;
The bluebird dips with flashing wings,
The robin flutes, the sparrow sings,
And the swallows float and flee.

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APRIL IN THE HILLS

I break the spirit's cloudy bands,
A wanderer in enchanted lands,
I feel the sun upon my hands;
  And far from care and strife
The broad earth bids me forth. I rise
With lifted brow and upward eyes.
I bathe my spirit in blue skies,
  And taste the springs of life.

I feel the tumult of new birth;
I waken with the wakening earth;
I match the bluebird in her mirth;
  And wild with wind and sun,
A treasurer of immortal days,
I roam the glorious world with praise,
The hillsides and the woodland ways,
  Till earth and I are one.

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Spring on the River

O SUN, shine hot on the river;
For the ice is turning an ashen hue,
And the still bright water is looking through,
And the myriad streams are greeting you
With a ballad of life to the giver,
From forest and field and sunny town,
Meeting and running and tripping down,
With laughter and song to the river.

Oh! the din on the boats by the river;
The barges are ringing while day avails,
With sound of hewing and hammering nails,
Planing and painting and swinging pails,
All day in their shrill endeavour;
For the waters brim over their wintry cup,
And the grinding ice is breaking up,
And we must away down the river.

Oh! the hum and the toil of the river;
The ridge of the rapid sprays and skips;
Loud and low by the water's lips,
Tearing the wet pines into strips,
The saw-mill is moaning ever.
The little gray sparrow flits and calls
On the rocks in the rain of the waterfalls,
And the logs are adrift in the river.

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SPRING ON THE RIVER

Oh! restlessly whirls the river;
The rivulets run and the cataract drones;
The spiders are flitting over the stones;
Summer winds float and the cedar moans;
And the eddies gleam and quiver.
O Sun, shine hot, shine long and abide
In the glory and power of thy summer tide
On the swift longing face of the river.

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Among the Timothy

LONG hours ago, while yet the morn was blithe,
Nor sharp athirst had drunk the beaded dew,
A mower came, and swung his gleaming scythe
Around this stump, and, shearing slowly, drew
Far round among the clover, ripe for hay,
A circle clean and gray;
And here among the scented swathes that gleam,
Mixed with dead daisies, it is sweet to lie
And watch the grass and the few-clouded sky,
Nor think but only dream.

For when the noon was turning, and the heat
Fell down most heavily on field and wood,
I too came hither, borne on restless feet,
Seeking some comfort for an aching mood.
Ah! I was weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind gray streets, the jingle of the throng,
Weary of hope that like a shape of stone
Sat near at hand without a smile or moan,
And weary most of song.

And those high moods of mine that sometime made
My heart a heaven, opening like a flower,
A sweeter world where I in wonder strayed,
Begirt with shapes of beauty and the power
Of dreams that moved through that enchanted clime
With changing breaths of rhyme.

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Were all gone lifeless now, like those white leaves
That hang all winter, shivering dead and blind
Among the sinewy beeches in the wind,
That vainly calls and grieves.

Ah! I will set no more mine o'ertasked brain
To barren search and toil that beareth nought,
For ever following with sore-footed pain
The crossing pathways of unbournèd thought;
But let it go, as one that hath no skill,
To take what shape it will,
An ant slow-burrowing in the earthy gloom,
A spider bathing in the dew at morn,
Or a brown bee in wayward fancy borne
From hidden bloom to bloom.

Hither and thither o'er the rocking grass
The little breezes, blithe as they are blind,
Teasing the slender blossoms pass and pass,
Soft-footed children of the gipsy wind,
To taste of every purple-fringèd head
Before the bloom is dead;
And scarcely heed the daisies that, endowed
With stems so short they cannot see, upbear
Their innocent sweet eyes distressed, and stare
Like children in a crowd.

Not far to fieldward in the central heat,
Shadowing the clover, a pale poplar stands
With glimmering leaves that, when the wind comes, beat
Together like innumerable small hands,
And with the calm, as in vague dreams astray,
Hang wan and silver-gray;

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Like sleepy mænads, who in pale surprise,
  Half-wakened by a prowling beast, have crept
  Out of the hidden covert, where they slept,
    At noon with languid eyes.

The crickets creak, and through the noonday glow,
  That crazy fiddler of the hot mid-year,
The dry cicada plies his wiry bow
  In long-spun cadence, thin and dusty sere;
  From the green grass the small grasshoppers' din
    Spreads soft and silvery thin;
And ever an anon a murmur steals
  Into mine ears of toil that moves alway,
  The crackling rustle of the pitch-forked hay
    And lazy jerk of wheels.

As so I lie and feel the soft hours wane,
  To wind and sun and peaceful sound laid bare,
That aching dim discomfort of the brain
  Fades off unseen, and shadowy-footed care
  Into some hidden corner creeps at last
    To slumber deep and fast;
And gliding on, quite fashioned to forget,
  From dream to dream I bid my spirit pass
  Out into the pale green ever-swaying grass
    To brood, but no more fret.

And hour by hour among all shapes that grow
  Of purple mints and daisies gemmed with gold
In sweet unrest my visions come and go;
  I feel and hear and with quiet eyes behold;
  And hour by hour, the ever-journeying sun,
    In gold and shadow spun.

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Into mine eyes and blood, and through the dim
Green glimmering forest of the grass shines down,
Till flower and blade, and every cranny brown,
And I are soaked with him.

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Morning on the Lievre

FAR above us where a jay
Screams his matins to the day,
Capped with gold and amethyst,
Like a vapour from the forge
Of a giant somewhere hid,
Out of hearing of the clang
Of his hammer, skirts of mist
Slowly up the woody gorge
Lift and hang.

Softly as a cloud we go,
Sky above and sky below,
Down the river; and the dip
Of the paddles scarcely breaks,
With the little silvery drip
Of the water as it shakes
From the blades, the crystal deep
Of the silence of the morn,
Of the forest yet asleep;
And the river reaches borne
In a mirror, purple gray,
Sheer away
To the misty line of light,
Where the forest and the stream,
In the shadow meet and plight,
Like a dream.

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MORNING ON THE LIEVRE

From amid a stretch of reeds,
Where the lazy river sucks
All the water as it bleeds
From a little curling creek,
And the muskrats peer and sneak
In around the sunken wrecks
Of a tree that swept the skies
Long ago,
On a sudden seven ducks
With a splashy rustle rise,
Stretching out their seven necks,
One before, and two behind,
And the others all arow,
And as steady as the wind
With a swivelling whistle go,
Through the purple shadow led,
Till we only hear their whir
In behind a rocky spur,
Just ahead.

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The Bird and the Hour

THE sun looks over a little hill
And floods the valley with gold—
A torrent of gold;
And the hither field is green and still;
Beyond it a cloud outrolled,
Is glowing molten and bright;
And soon the hill, and the valley and all,
With a quiet fall,
Shall be gathered into the night.
And yet a moment more,
Out of the silent wood,
As if from the closing door
Of another world and another lovelier mood,
Hear'st thou the hermit pour—
So sweet! so magical!—
His golden music, ghostly beautiful.

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June

LONG, long ago, it seems, this summer morn
That pale-browed April passed with pensive tread
Through the frore woods, and from its frost-bound bed
Woke the arbutus with her silver horn;
And now May, too, is fled,
The flower-crowned month, the merry laughing May,
With rosy feet and fingers dewy wet,
Leaving the woods and all cool gardens gay
With tulips and the scented violet.

Gone are the wind-flower and the adder-tongue
And the sad drooping bellwort, and no more
The snowy trilliums crowd the forest's floor;
The purpling grasses are no longer young,
And summer's wide-set door
O'er the thronged hills and the broad panting earth
Lets in the torrent of the later bloom,
Haytime, and harvest, and the after mirth,
The slow soft rain, the rushing thunder plume.

All day in garden alleys moist and dim,
The humid air is burdened with the rose;
In moss-deep woods the creamy orchid blows;
And now the vesper-sparrows' pealing hymn
From every orchard close

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JUNE

At eve comes flooding rich and silvery;
The daisies in great meadows swing and shine;
And with the wind a sound as of the sea
Roars in the maples and the topmost pine.

High in the hills the solitary thrush
Tunes magically his music of fine dreams,
In briary dells, by boulder-broken streams;
And wide and far on nebulous fields aflush
The mellow morning gleams.
The orange cone-flowers purple-bossed are there,
The meadow's bold-eyed gypsies deep of hue,
And slender hawkweed tall and softly fair,
And rosy tops of fleabane veiled with dew.

So with thronged voices and unhasting flight
The fervid hours with long return go by;
The far-heard hylas piping shrill and high
Tell the slow moments of the solemn night
With unremitting cry:
Lustrous and large out of the gathering drouth
The planets gleam; the baleful Scorpion
Trails his dim fires along the drousèd south;
The silent world-incrusted round moves on.

And all the dim night long the moon's white beams
Nestle deep down in every brooding tree,
And sleeping birds, touched with a silly glee,
Waken at midnight from their blissful dreams,
And carol brokenly.
Dim surging motions and uneasy dreads
Scare the light slumber from men's busy eyes,
And parted lovers on their restless beds
Toss and yearn out, and cannot sleep for sighs.

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JUNE

Oft have I striven, sweet month, to figure thee,
As dreamers of old time were wont to feign,
In living form of flesh, and striven in vain;
Yet when some sudden old-world mystery
Of passion fired my brain,
Thy shape hath flashed upon me like no dream,
Wandering with scented curls that heaped the breeze,
Or by the hollow of some reeded stream
Sitting waist-deep in white anemones;

And even as I glimpsed thee thou wert gone,
A dream for mortal eyes too proudly coy,
Yet in thy place for subtle thoughts' employ
The golden magic clung, a light that shone
And filled me with thy joy.
Before me like a mist that streamed and fell
All names and shapes of antique beauty passed
In garlanded procession with the swell
Of flutes between the beechen stems; and last,

I saw the Arcadian valley, the loved wood,
Alpheus stream divine, the sighing shore,
And through the cool green glades, awake once more,
Psyche, the white-limbed goddess, still pursued,
Fleet-footed as of yore,
The noonday ringing with her frighted peals,
Down the bright sward and through the reeds she ran,
Urged by the mountain echoes, at her heels
The hot-blown cheeks and trampling feet of Pan.

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Forest Moods

THERE is singing of birds in the deep wet woods,
In the heart of the listening solitudes,
Peewees, and thrushes, and sparrows, not few,
And all the notes of their throats are true.

The thrush from the innermost ash takes on
A tender dream of the treasured and gone;
But the sparrow singeth with pride and cheer
Of the might and light of the present and here.

There is shining of flowers in the deep wet woods,
In the heart of the sensitive solitudes,
The roseate bell and the lily are there,
And every leaf of their sheaf is fair.

Careless and bold, without dream of woe,
The trilliums scatter their flags of snow;
But the pale wood-daffodil covers her face,
Agloom with the doom of a sorrowful race.

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The Meadow

HERE when the cloudless April days begin,
And the quaint crows flock thicker day by day,
Filling the forests with a pleasant din,
And the soiled snow creeps secretly away,
Comes the small busy sparrow, primed with glee,
First preacher in the naked wilderness,
Piping an end to all the long distress
From every fence and every leafless tree.

Now with soft slight and viewless artifice
Winter's iron work is wondrously undone;
In all the little hollows cored with ice
The clear brown pools stand simmering in the sun,
Frail lucid worlds, upon whose tremulous floors
All day the wandering water-bugs at will,
Shy mariners whose oars are never still,
Voyage and dream about the heightening shores.

The bluebird, peeping from the gnarlèd thorn,
Prattles upon his frolic flute, or flings,
In bounding flight across the golden morn,
An azure gleam from off his splendid wings.
Here the slim-pinioned swallows sweep and pass
Down to the far-off river; the black crow
With wise and wary visage to and fro
Settles and stalks about the withered grass.

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Here, when the murmurous May-day is half gone,
The watchful lark before my feet takes flight,
And wheeling to some lonelier field far on,
Drops with obstreperous cry; and here at night,
When the first star precedes the great red moon,
The shore-lark tinkles from the darkening field,
Somewhere, we know not, in the dusk concealed,
His little creakling and continuous tune.

Here, too, the robins, lusty as of old,
Hunt the waste grass for forage, or prolong
From every quarter of these fields the bold
Blithe phrases of their never-finished song,
The white-throat's distant descant with slow stress
Note after note upon the noonday falls,
Filling the leisured air at intervals
With his own mood of piercing pensiveness.

How often from this windy upland perch,
Mine eyes have seen the forest break in bloom,
The rose-red maple and the golden birch,
The dusty yellow of the elms, the gloom
Of the tall poplar hung with tasselled black;
Ah, I have watched till eye and ear and brain
Grew full of dreams as they, the moated plain,
The sun-steeped wood, the marsh-land at its back,

The valley where the river wheels and fills,
Yon city glimmering in its smoky shroud,
And out at the last misty rim the hills
Blue and far off and mounded like a cloud,
And here the noisy rutted road that goes
Down the slope yonder, flanked on either side

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With the smooth-furrowed fields flung black and wide,
Patched with pale water sleeping in the rows.

So as I watched the crowded leaves expand,
The bloom break sheath, the summer's strength uprear,
In earth's great mother heart already planned
The heaped and burgeoned plenty of the year,
Even as she from out her wintry cell
My spirit also sprang to life anew,
And day by day as the spring's bounty grew,
Its conquering joy possessed me like a spell.

In reverie by day and midnight dream
I sought these upland fields and walked apart,
Musing on Nature, till my thought did seem
To read the very secrets of her heart;
In mooded moments earnest and sublime
I stored the themes of many a future song,
Whose substance should be Nature's, clear and strong,
Bound in a casket of majestic rhyme.

Brave bud-like plans that never reached the fruit,
Like hers our mother's who with every hour,
Easily replenished from the sleepless root,
Covers her bosom with fresh bud and flower;
Yet I was happy as young lovers be,
Who in the season of their passion's birth
Deem that they have their utmost worship's worth,
If love be near them, just to hear and see.

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After Rain

FOR three whole days across the sky,
In sullen packs that loomed and broke,
With flying fringes dim as smoke,
The columns of the rain went by;
At every hour the wind awoke;
The darkness passed upon the plain;
The great drops rattled at the pane.

Now piped the wind, or far aloof
Fell to a sough remote and dull;
And all night long with rush and lull
The rain kept drumming on the roof:
I heard till ear and sense were full
The clash or silence of the leaves,
The gurgle in the creaking eaves.

But when the fourth day came—at noon,
The darkness and the rain were by;
The sunward roofs were steaming dry;
And all the world was flecked and strewn
With shadows from a fleecy sky.
The haymakers were forth and gone,
And every rillet laughed and shone.

Then, too, on me that loved so well
The world, despairing in her blight,
Uplifted with her least delight,
On me, as on the earth, there fell
New happiness of mirth and might;
I strode the valleys pied and still;
I climbed upon the breezy hill.

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AFTER RAIN

I watched the gray hawk wheel and drop,
Sole shadow on the shining world;
I saw the mountains clothed and curled,
With forest ruffling to the top;
I saw the river's length unfurled,
    Pale silver down the fruited plain,
    Grown great and stately with the rain.

Through miles of shadow and soft heat,
Where field and fallow, fence and tree,
Were all one world of greenery,
I hear the robin ringing sweet,
The sparrow piping silverly,
    The thrushes at the forest's hem;
    And as I went I sang with them.

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Comfort of the Fields

WHAT would'st thou have for easement after griet,
When the rude world hath used thee with despite,
And care sits at thine elbow day and night,
Filching thy pleasures like a subtle thief?
To me, when life besets me in such wise,
'Tis sweetest to break forth, to drop the chain,
And grasp the freedom of this pleasant earth,
To roam in idleness and sober mirth,
Through summer airs and summer lands, and drain
The comfort of wide fields unto tired eyes.

By hills and waters, farms and solitudes,
To wander by the day with wilful feet;
Through fielded valleys wide with yellowing wheat;
Along gray roads that run between deep woods,
Murmurous and cool; through hallowed slopes of pine,
Where the long daylight dreams, unpierced, unstirred,
And only the rich-throated thrush is heard;
By lonely forest brooks that froth and shine
In bouldered crannies buried in the hills;
By broken beeches tangled with wild vine,
And log-strewn rivers murmurous with mills.

In upland pastures, sown with gold, and sweet
With the keen perfume of the ripening grass,
Where wings of birds and filmy shadows pass,
Spread thick as stars with shining marguerite:

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To haunt old fences overgrown with brier,
  Muffled in vines, and hawthorns, and wild cherries,
  Rank poisonous ivies, red-bunched elder-berries,
And piéd blossoms to the heart's desire,
  Gray mullein towering into yellow bloom,
  Pink-tasselled milkweed, breathing dense perfume,
And swarthy vervain, tipped with violet fire.

To hear at eve the bleating of far flocks,
  The mud-hen's whistle from the marsh at morn;
  To skirt with deafened ears and brain o'erborne
Some foam-filled rapid charging down its rocks
With iron roar of waters; far away
  Across wide-reeded meres, pensive with noon,
To hear the querulous outcry of the loon;
To lie among deep rocks, and watch all day
  On liquid heights the snowy clouds melt by;
Or hear from wood-capped mountain-brows the jay
  Pierce the bright morning with his jibing cry.

To feast on summer sounds; the jolted wains,
  The thresher humming from the farm near by,
  The prattling cricket's intermittent cry,
The locust's rattle from the sultry lanes;
Or in the shadow of some oaken spray,
  To watch, as through a mist of light and dreams,
  The far-off hayfields, where the dusty teams
Drive round and round the lessening squares of hay,
  And hear upon the wind, now loud, now low,
With drowsy cadence half a summer's day,
  The clatter of the reapers come and go.

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COMFORT OF THE FIELDS

Far violet hills, horizons filmed with showers,
  The murmur of cool streams, the forest's gloom,
  The voices of the breathing grass, the hum
Of ancient gardens overbanked with flowers:
Thus, with a smile as golden as the dawn,
  And cool fair fingers radiantly divine,
  The mighty mother brings us in her hand,
For all tired eyes and foreheads pinched and wan,
Her restful cup, her beaker of bright wine;
  Drink, and be filled, and ye shall understand!

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Heat

FROM plains that reel to southward, dim,
The road runs by me white and bare;
Up the steep hill it seems to swim
Beyond, and melt into the glare.
Upward half-way, or it may be
Nearer the summit, slowly steals
A hay-cart, moving dustily
With idly clacking wheels.

By his cart's side the wagoner
Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
Of white dust puffing to his knees.
This wagon on the height above,
From sky to sky on either hand,
Is the sole thing that seems to move
In all the heat-held land.

Beyond me in the fields the sun
Soaks in the grass and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one;
Even the buttercups are still.
On the brook yonder not a breath
Disturbs the spider or the midge.
The water-bugs draw close beneath
The cool gloom of the bridge.

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HEAT

Where the far elm-tree shadows flood
  Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
  Lie waiting for the heat to pass.
From somewhere on the slope near by
  Into the pale depth of the noon
A wandering thrush slides leisurely
  His thin revolving tune.

In intervals of dreams I hear
  The cricket from the droughty ground:
The grasshoppers spin into mine ear
  A small innumerable sound.
I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
  The burning sky-line blinds my sight:
The woods far off are blue with haze:
  The hills are drenched in light.

And yet to me not this or that
  Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
  I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessèd power
  Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
  My thoughts grow keen and clear.

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At the Ferry

ON such a day the shrunken stream
Spends its last water and runs dry;
Clouds like far turrets in a dream
Stand baseless in the burning sky.
On such a day at every rod
The toilers in the hayfield halt,
With dripping brows, and the parched sod
Yields to the crushing foot like salt.

But here a little wind astir,
Seen waterward in jetting lines,
From yonder hillside topped with fir
Comes pungent with the breath of pines;
And here when all the noon hangs still,
White-hot upon the city tiles,
A perfume and a wintry chill
Breathe from the yellow lumber-piles.

And all day long there falls a blur
Of noises upon listless ears,
The rumble of the trams, the stir
Of barges at the clacking piers;
The champ of wheels, the crash of steam,
And ever, without change or stay,
The drone, as through a troubled dream,
Of waters falling far away.

A tug-boat up the farther shore
Half pants, half whistles, in her draught;
The cadence of a creaking oar
Falls drowsily; a corded raft

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AT THE FERRY

Creeps slowly in the noonday gleam,
  And wheresoe'er a shadow sleeps
The men lie by, or half adream,
  Stand leaning at the idle sweeps.

And all day long in the quiet bay
  The eddying amber depths retard,
And hold, as in a ring, at play,
  The heavy saw-logs notched and scarred;
And yonder between cape and shoal,
  Where the long currents swing and shift,
An agèd punt-man with his pole
  Is searching in the parted drift.

At moments from the distant glare
  The murmur of a railway steals,
Round yonder jutting point the air
  Is beaten with the puff of wheels;
And here at hand an open mill,
  Strong clamour at perpetual drive,
With changing chant, now hoarse, now shrill
  Keeps dinning like a mighty hive.

A furnace over field and mead,
  The rounding noon hangs hard and white;
Into the gathering heats recede
  The hollows of the Chelsea height;
But under all to one quiet tune,
  A spirit in cool depths withdrawn,
With logs, and dust, and wrack bestrewn,
  The stately river journeys on.

I watch the swinging currents go
  Far down to where, enclosed and piled,

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AT THE FERRY

The logs crowd, and the Gatineau
  Comes rushing from the northern wild.
I see the long low point, where close
  The shore-lines, and the waters end,
I watch the barges pass in rows
  That vanish at the tapering bend.

I see as at the noon's pale core—
  A shadow that lifts clear and floats—
The cabin'd village round the shore,
  The landing and the fringe of boats;
Faint films of smoke that curl and wreathe;
  And upward with the like desire
The vast grey church that seems to breathe
  In heaven with its dreaming spire.

And there the last blue boundaries rise,
  That guard within their compass furled
This plot of earth: beyond them lies
  The mystery of the echoing world;
And still my thought goes on, and yields
  New vision and new joy to me,
Far peopled hills, and ancient fields,
  And cities by the crested sea.

I see no more the barges pass,
  Nor mark the ripple round the pier,
And all the uproar, mass on mass,
  Falls dead upon a vacant ear.
Beyond the tumult of the mills,
  And all the city's sound and strife,
Beyond the waste, beyond the hills,
  I look far out and dream of life.

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September

NOW hath the summer reached her golden close,
And lost, amid her cornfields, bright of soul,
Scarcely perceives from her divine repose
How near, how swift, the inevitable goal:
Still, still, she smiles, though from her careless feet
The bounty and the fruitful strength are gone,
And through the soft long wondering days goes on
The silent sere decadence sad and sweet.

The kingbird and the pensive thrush are fled,
Children of light, too fearful of the gloom;
The sun falls low, the secret word is said,
The mouldering woods grow silent as the tomb;
Even the fields have lost their sovereign grace,
The cone-flower and the marguerite; and no more.
Across the river's shadow-haunted floor,
The paths of skimming swallows interlace.

Already in the outland wilderness
The forests echo with unwonted dins;
In clamorous gangs the gathering woodmen press
Northward, and the stern winter's toil begins.
Around the long low shanties, whose rough lines
Break the sealed dreams of many an unnamed lake,
Already in the frost-clear morns awake
The crash and thunder of the falling pines.

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Where the tilled earth, with all its fields set free,
  Naked and yellow from the harvest lies,
By many a loft and busy granary,
  The hum and tumult of the threshers rise;
There the tanned farmers labour without slack,
  Till twilight deepens round the spouting mill,
  Feeding the loosened sheaves, or with fierce will,
Pitching waist-deep upon the dusty stack.

Still a brief while, ere the old year quite pass,
  Our wandering steps and wistful eyes shall greet
The leaf, the water, the belovéd grass;
  Still from these haunts and this accustomed seat
I see the wood-wrapt city, swept with light,
  The blue long-shadowed distance, and, between,
  The dotted farm-lands with their parcelled green,
The dark pine forest and the watchful height.

I see the broad rough meadow stretched away
  Into the crystal sunshine, wastes of sod,
Acres of withered vervain, purple-gray,
  Branches of aster, groves of goldenrod;
And yonder, toward the sunlit summit, strewn
  With shadowy boulders, crowned and swathed with weed,
  Stand ranks of silken thistles, blown to seed,
Long silver fleeces shining like the noon.

In far-off russet cornfields, where the dry
  Gray shocks stand peaked and withering, half concealed
In the rough earth, the orange pumpkins lie,
  Full-ribbed; and in the windless pasture-field

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SEPTEMBER

The sleek red horses o'er the sun-warmed ground
  Stand pensively about in companies,
  While all around them from the motionless trees
The long clean shadows sleep without a sound.

Under cool elm-trees floats the distant stream,
  Moveless as air; and o'er the vast warm earth
The fathomless daylight seems to stand and dream,
  A liquid cool elixir—all its girth
Bound with faint haze, a frail transparency,
  Whose lucid purple barely veils and fills
  The utmost valleys and the thin last hills,
Nor mars one whit their perfect clarity.

Thus without grief the golden days go by,
  So soft we scarcely notice how they wend,
And like a smile half happy, or a sigh,
  The summer passes to her quiet end;
And soon, too soon, around the cumbered eaves
  Sly frosts shall take the creepers by surprise,
  And through the wind-touched reddening woods
    shall rise
October with the rain of ruined leaves.

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In October

ALONG the waste, a great way off, the pines
Like tall slim priests of storm, stand up and bar
The low long strip of dolorous red that lines
The under west, where wet winds moan afar.
The cornfields all are brown, and brown the meadows
With the blown leaves' wind-heapèd traceries,
And the brown thistle stems that cast no shadows,
And bear no bloom for bees.

As slowly earthward leaf by red leaf slips,
The sad trees rustle in chill misery,
A soft strange inner sound of pain-crazed lips,
That move and murmur incoherently;
As if all leaves, that yet have breath, were sighing,
With pale hushed throats, for death is at the door,
So many low soft masses for the dying
Sweet leaves that live no more.

Here will I sit upon this naked stone,
Draw my coat closer with my numbèd hands,
And hear the ferns sigh, and the wet woods moan,
And send my heart out to the ashen lands;
And I will ask myself what golden madness,
What balmèd breaths of dreamland spicery,
What visions of soft laughter and light sadness
Were sweet last month to me.

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IN OCTOBER

The dry dead leaves flit by with thin weird tunes,
  Like failing murmurs of some conquered creed,
Graven in mystic markings with strange runes,
  That none but stars and biting winds may read;
Here I will wait a little; I am weary,
  Not torn with pain of any lurid hue,
But only still and very gray, and dreary,
  Sweet sombre lands, like you.

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An Autumn Landscape

NO wind there is that either pipes or moans;
The fields are cold and still; the sky
Is covered with a blue-gray sheet
Of motionless cloud; and at my feet
The river, curling softly by,
Whispers and dimples round its quiet gray stones.

Along the chill green slope that dips and heaves
The road runs rough and silent, lined
With plum-trees, misty and blue-gray,
And poplars pallid as the day,
In masses spectral, undefined,
Pale greenish stems half hid in dry gray leaves.

And on beside the river's sober edge
A long fresh field lies black. Beyond,
Low thickets gray and reddish stand,
Stroked white with birch; and near at hand,
Over a little steel-smooth pond,
Hang multitudes of thin and withering sedge.

Across a waste and solitary rise
A ploughman urges his dull team,
A stooped gray figure with prone brow
That plunges bending to the plough
With strong, uneven steps. The stream
Rings and re-echoes with his furious cries.

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Sometimes the lowing of a cow, long-drawn,
  Comes from far off; and crows in strings
    Pass on the upper silences.
    A flock of small gray goldfinches,
  Flown down with silvery twitterings,
Rustle among the birch-cones and are gone.

This day the season seems like one that heeds,
  With fixèd ear and lifted hand,
    All moods that yet are known on earth,
    All motions that have faintest birth,
  If haply she may understand
The utmost inward sense of all her deeds.

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In November

WITH loitering step and quiet eye,
Beneath the low November sky,
I wandered in the woods, and found
A clearing, where the broken ground
Was scattered with black stumps and briers,
And the old wreck of forest fires.
It was a bleak and sandy spot,
And, all about, the vacant plot,
Was peopled and inhabited
By scores of mulleins long since dead.
A silent and forsaken brood
In that mute opening of the wood,
So shrivelled and so thin they were,
So gray, so haggard, and austere,
Not plants at all they seemed to me,
But rather some spare company
Of hermit folk, who long ago,
Wandering in bodies to and fro,
Had chanced upon this lonely way,
And rested thus, till death one day
Surprised them at their compline prayer,
And left them standing lifeless there.
There was no sound about the wood
Save the wind's secret stir. I stood
Among the mullein-stalks as still
As if myself had grown to be
One of their sombre company,
A body without wish or will.

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And as I stood, quite suddenly,
Down from a furrow in the sky
The sun shone out a little space
Across that silent sober place,
Over the sand heaps and brown sod,
The mulleins and dead goldenrod,
And passed beyond the thickets gray,
And lit the fallen leaves that lay,
Level and deep within the wood,
A rustling yellow multitude.

And all around me the thin light,
So sere, so melancholy bright,
Fell like the half-reflected gleam
Or shadow of some former dream;
A moment's golden reverie
Poured out on every plant and tree
A semblance of weird joy, or less,
A sort of spectral happiness;
And I, too, standing idly there,
With muffled hands in the chill air,
Felt the warm glow about my feet,
And shuddering betwixt cold and heat,
Drew my thoughts closer, like a cloak,
While something in my blood awoke,
A nameless and unnatural cheer,
A pleasure secret and austere.

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By an Autumn Stream

NOW overhead,
Where the rivulet loiters and stops,
The bittersweet hangs from the tops
Of the alders and cherries
Its bunches of beautiful berries,
Orange and red.

And the snowbirds flee,
Tossing up on the far brown field,
Now flashing and now concealed,
Like fringes of spray
That vanish and gleam on the gray
Field of the sea.

Flickering light,
Come the last of the leaves down borne,
And patches of pale white corn
In the wind complain,
Like the slow rustle of rain
Noticed by night.

Withered and thinned,
The sentinel mullein looms,
With the pale gray shadowy plumes
Of the goldenrod;
And the milkweed opens its pod,
Tempting the wind.

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BY AN AUTUMN STREAM

Aloft on the hill,
A cloudrift opens and shines
Through a break in its gorget of pines,
And it dreams at my feet
In a sad, silvery sheet,
Utterly still.

All things that be
Seem plunged into silence, distraught,
By some stern, some necessitous thought:
It wraps and enthralls
Marsh, meadow, and forest; and falls
Also on me.

Digitized by Google

Storm

OUT of the gray northwest, where many a day gone by
Ye tugged and howled in your tempestuous grot,
And evermore the huge frost giants lie,
Your wizard guards in vigilance unforgot,
Out of the gray northwest, for now the bonds are riven,
On wide white wings your thongless flight is driven,
That lulls but resteth not.

And all the gray day long, and all the dense wild night,
Ye wheel and hurry with the sheeted snow,
By cedared waste and many a pine-dark height,
Across white rivers frozen fast below;
Over the lonely forests, where the flowers yet sleeping
Turn in their narrow beds with dreams of weeping
In some remembered woe;

Across the unfenced wide marsh levels, where the dry
Brown ferns sigh out, and last year's sedges scold
In some drear language, rustling haggardly
Their thin dead leaves and dusky hoods of gold;
Across gray beechwoods where the pallid leaves unfalling
In the blind gusts like homeless ghosts are calling
With voices cracked and old;

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STORM

Across the solitary clearings, where the low
  Fierce gusts howl through the blinded woods, and round
The buried shanties all day long the snow
  Sifts and piles up in many a spectral mound;
Across lone villages in eerie wildernesses
Whose hidden life no living shape confesses
  Nor any human sound;

Across the serried masses of dim cities, blown
  Full of the snow that ever shifts and swells,
While far above them all their towers of stone
  Stand and beat back your fierce and tyrannous spells,
And hour by hour send out, like voices torn and broken
Of battling giants that have grandly spoken,
  The veering sound of bells;

So day and night, O Wind, with hiss and moan you fleet,
  Where once long gone on many a green-leafed day
Your gentler brethren wandered with light feet
  And sang, with voices soft and sweet as they,
The same blind thought that you with wilder might are speaking,
Seeking the same strange thing that you are seeking
  In this your stormier way.

O Wind, wild-voicèd brother, in your northern cave,
  My spirit also being so beset
With pride and pain, I heard you beat and rave,
  Grinding your chains with furious howl and fret,
Knowing full well that all earth's moving things inherit
The same chained might and madness of the spirit,
  That none may quite forget.

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STORM

You in your cave of snows, we in our narrow girth
  Of need and sense, for ever chafe and pine;
Only in moods of some demonic birth
  Our souls take fire, our flashing wings untwine;
Even like you, mad Wind, above our broken prison,
With streaming hair and maddened eyes uprisen,
  We dream ourselves divine;

Mad moods that come and go in some mysterious way,
  That flash and fall, none knoweth how or why,
O Wind, our brother, they are yours to-day,
  The stormy joy, the sweeping mastery;
Deep in our narrow cells, we hear you, we awaken,
With hands afret and bosoms strangely shaken,
  We answer to your cry.

I most that love you, Wind, when you are fierce and free,
  In these dull fetters cannot long remain;
Lo, I will rise and break my thongs and flee
  Forth to your drift and beating, till my brain
Even for an hour grow wild in your divine embraces,
And then creep back into mine earthly traces,
  And bind me with my chain.

Nay, Wind, I hear you, desperate brother, in your might
  Whistle and howl; I shall not tarry long,
And though the day be blind and fierce, the night
  Be dense and wild, I still am glad and strong
To meet you face to face; through all your gust and drifting
With brow held high, my joyous hands uplifting,
  I cry you song for song.

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Winter

THE long days came and went; the riotous bees
Tore the warm grapes in many a dusty vine,
And men grew faint and thin with too much ease,
And Winter gave no sign;
But all the while beyond the northmost woods
He sat and smiled and watched his spirits play
In elfish dance and eerie roundelay,
Tripping in many moods
With snowy curve and fairy crystal shine.

But now the time is come: with southward speed
The elfin spirits pass: a secret sting
Hath fallen and smitten flower and fruit and weed,
And every leafy thing.
The wet woods moan: the dead leaves break and fall;
In still night-watches wakeful men have heard
The muffled pipe of many a passing bird,
High over hut and hall,
Straining to southward with unresting wing.

And then they come with colder feet, and fret
The winds with snow, and tuck the streams to sleep
With icy sheet and gleaming coverlet,
And fill the valleys deep
With curvèd drifts, and a strange music raves
Among the pines, sometimes in wails, and then
In whistled laughter, till affrighted men
Draw close, and into caves
And earthy holes the blind beasts curl and creep.

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And so all day above the toiling heads
Of men's poor chimneys, full of impish freaks,
Tearing and twisting in tight-curlèd shreds
The vain unnumbered reeks,
The Winter speeds his fairies forth and mocks
Poor bitten men with laughter icy cold,
Turning the brown of youth to white and old
With hoary-woven locks,
And gray men young with roses in their cheeks.

And after thaws, when liberal water swells
The bursting eaves, he biddeth drip and grow
The curly horns of ribbèd icicles
In many a beard-like row.
In secret moods of mercy and soft dole,
Old warpèd wrecks and things of mouldering death
That summer scorns and man abandoneth
His careful hands console
With lawny robes and draperies of snow.

And when night comes, his spirits with chill feet,
Winged with white mirth and noiseless mockery,
Across men's pallid windows peer and fleet,
And smiling silverly
Draw with mute fingers on the frosted glass
Quaint fairy shapes of icèd witcheries,
Pale flowers and glinting ferns and frigid trees
And meads of mystic grass,
Graven in many an austere phantasy.

But far away the Winter dreams alone,
Rustling among his snow-drifts, and resigns
Cold fondling ears to hear the cedars moan
In dusky-skirted lines

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Strange answers of an ancient runic call;
  Or somewhere watches with his antique eyes,
  Gray-chill with frosty-lidded reveries,
    The silvery moonshine fall
In misty wedges through his girth of pines.

Poor mortals haste and hide away: creep soon
  Into your icy beds: the embers die;
And on your frosted panes the pallid moon
    Is glimmering brokenly.
Mutter faint prayers that spring will come e'erwhile,
  Scarring with thaws and dripping days and nights
  The shining majesty of him that smites
    And slays you with a smile
Upon his silvery lips, of glinting mockery.

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Snowbirds

ALONG the narrow sandy height
I watch them swiftly come and go,
Or round the leafless wood,
Like flurries of wind-driven snow,
Revolving in perpetual flight,
A changing multitude.

Nearer and nearer still they sway,
And, scattering in a circled sweep,
Rush down without a sound;
And now I see them peer and peep,
Across yon level bleak and gray,
Searching the frozen ground,—

Until a little wind upheaves,
And makes a sudden rustling there,
And then they drop their play,
Flash up into the sunless air,
And like a flight of silver leaves
Swirl round and sweep away.

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Snow

WHITE are the far-off plains, and white
The fading forests grow;
The wind dies out along the height,
And denser still the snow,
A gathering weight on roof and tree,
Falls down scarce audibly.

The road before me smoothes and fills
Apace, and all about
The fences dwindle, and the hills
Are blotted slowly out;
The naked trees loom spectrally
Into the dim white sky.

The meadows and far-sheeted streams
Lie still without a sound;
Like some soft minister of dreams
The snow-fall hoods me round;
In wood and water, earth and air,
A silence everywhere.

Save when at lonely intervals
Some farmer's sleigh urged on,
With rustling runners and sharp bells,
Swings by me and is gone;
Or from the empty waste I hear
A sound remote and clear;

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SNOW

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The barking of a dog, or call
To cattle, sharply pealed,
Borne echoing from some wayside stall
Or barnyard far afield;
Then all is silent, and the snow
Falls, settling soft and slow.

The evening deepens, and the gray
Folds closer earth and sky;
The world seems shrouded far away;
Its noises sleep, and I,
As secret as yon buried stream,
Plod dumbly on, and dream.

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Sunset

FROM this windy bridge at rest,
In some former curious hour,
We have watched the city's hue,
All along the orange west,
Cupola and pointed tower,
Darken into solid blue.

Tho' the biting north wind breaks
Full across this drifted hold,
Let us stand with icèd cheeks
Watching westward as of old;

Past the violet mountain-head
To the farthest fringe of pine,
Where far off the purple-red
Narrows to a dusky line,
And the last pale splendours die
Slowly from the olive sky;

Till the thin clouds wear away
Into threads of purple-gray,
And the sudden stars between
Brighten in the pallid green;

Till above the spacious east,
Slow returnèd one by one,
Like pale prisoners released
From the dungeons of the sun,
Capella and her train appear
In the glittering Charioteer;

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Till the rounded moon shall grow
Great above the eastern snow,
Shining into burnished gold;
And the silver earth outrolled,
In the misty yellow light,
Shall take on the width of night.

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The Sun Cup

THE earth is the cup of the sun,
That he filleth at morning with wine,
With the warm, strong wine of his might
From the vintage of gold and of light,
Fills it, and makes it divine.

And at night when his journey is done,
At the gate of his radiant hall,
He setteth his lips to the brim,
With a long last look of his eye,
And lifts it and draineth it dry,
Drains till he leaveth it all
Empty and hollow and dim.

And then as he passes to sleep,
Still full of the feats that he did
Long ago in Olympian wars,
He closes it down with the sweep
Of its slow turning luminous lid,
Its cover of darkness and stars,
Wrought once by Hephæstus of old
With violet and vastness and gold.

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SONNETS

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An Invocation

SPIRIT of joy and that enchanted air
That feeds the poet's parted lips like wine,
I dreamed and wandered hand in hand of thine,
How many a blissful day; but doubt and care,
The ghostly masters of this world, did come
With tortuous malady and hid the day,
A gnawing flame that robbed my songs away,
And bound mine ears, and made me blind and dumb.
Master of mine, and Lord of light and ease,
Return, return, and take me by the hand;
Lead me again into that pleasant land,
Whose charmèd eyes and griefless lips adore
No lord but beauty; let me see once more
The light upon her golden palaces.

A March Day

The wind went by in buffeting gusts that grew
And lulled and gathered. In the town below
It piled the drifts and drove the powdered snow
In sheets from the roof-edges. Dim clouds flew
All day across the silvery mist-veiled blue,
And far away between the dark pine-patches
The sun shone out and dimmed again by snatches,
And swept the foothills with long gleams, and threw
A blind white glare upon the buried plain.
Toward night there came a rush of clouds with rain

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And sleet driving, and then all passed, and now
Clouds, wind and sunshine, all have sunk to rest.
Slowly athwart the midnight's eastern brow,
The Herdsman mounts: Orion spans the west.

A Prayer

O earth, O dewy mother, breathe on us
Something of all thy beauty and thy might,
Us that are part of day, but most of night,
Not strong like thee, but ever burdened thus
With glooms and cares, things pale and dolorous
Whose gladdest moments are not wholly bright;
Something of all thy freshness and thy light,
O Earth, O mighty mother, breathe on us.
O mother, who wast long before our day,
And after us full many an age shalt be,
Careworn and blind, we wander from thy way:
Born of thy strength, yet weak and halt are we;
Grant us O mother, therefore, us who pray,
Some little of thy light and majesty.

March

Over the dripping roofs and sunk snow-barrows,
The bells are ringing loud and strangely near,
The shout of children dins upon mine ear
Shrilly, and like a flight of silvery arrows
Showers the sweet gossip of the British sparrows,
Gathered in noisy knots of one or two,

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To joke and chatter just as mortals do
Over the day's long tale of joys and sorrows;
Talk before bed-time of bold deeds together,
Of theft and fights, of hard-times and the weather,
Till sleep disarm them, to each little brain
Bringing tucked wings and many a blissful dream,
Visions of wind and sun, of field and stream,
And busy barnyards with their scattered grain.

Love-Wonder

Or whether sad or joyous be her hours,
Yet ever is she good and ever fair.
If she be glad, 'tis like a child's wild air,
Who claps her hands above a heap of flowers;
And if she's sad, it is no cloud that lowers,
Rather a saint's pale grace, whose golden hair
Gleams like a crown, whose eyes are like a prayer
From some quiet window under minster towers.
But ah, Belovèd, how shall I be taught
To tell this truth in any rhymèd line?
For words and woven phrases fall to naught,
Lost in the silence of one dream divine.
Wrapped in the beating wonder of this thought:
Even thou, who art so precious, thou art mine!

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In March

The sun falls warm: the southern winds awake:
The air seethes upwards with a steamy shiver:
Each dip of the road is now a crystal lake,
And every rut a little dancing river.
Through great soft clouds that sunder overhead
The deep sky breaks as pearly blue as summer:
Out of a cleft beside the river's bed
Flaps the black crow, the first demure newcomer.
The last seared drifts are eating fast away
With glassy tinkle into glittering laces:
Dogs lie asleep, and little children play
With tops and marbles in the sun-bare places;
And I that stroll with many a thoughtful pause
Almost forget that winter ever was.

On the Companionship with Nature

Let us be much with Nature; not as they
That labour without seeing, that employ
Her unloved forces, blindly without joy;
Nor those whose hands and crude delights obey
The old brute passion to hunt down and slay;
But rather as children of one common birth,
Discerning in each natural fruit of earth
Kinship and bond with this diviner clay.
Let us be with her wholly at all hours,
With the fond lover's zest, who is content
If his ear hears, and if his eye but sees;
So shall we grow like her in mould and bent,
Our bodies stately as her blessèd trees,
Our thoughts as sweet and sumptuous as her flowers.

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April Night

How deep the April night is in its noon,
The hopeful, solemn, many-murmured night!
The earth lies hushed with expectation; bright
Above the world's dark border burns the moon,
Yellow and large; from forest floorways, strewn
With flowers, and fields that tingle with new birth,
The moist smell of the unimprisoned earth
Comes up, a sigh, a haunting promise. Soon,
Ah, soon, the teeming triumph! At my feet
The river with its stately sweep and wheel
Moves on slow-motioned, luminous, gray like steel.
From fields far off whose watery hollows gleam,
Aye with blown throats that make the long hours sweet,
The sleepless toads are murmuring in their dream.

Love-Doubt

Yearning upon the faint rose-curves that flit
About her child-sweet mouth and innocent cheek,
And in her eyes watching with eyes all meek
The light and shadow of laughter, I would sit
Mute, knowing our two souls might never knit;
As if a pale proud lily-flower should seek
The love of some red rose, but could not speak
One word of her blithe tongue to tell of it.
For oh, my Love was sunny-lipped and stirred
With all swift light and sound and gloom not long
Retained; I, with dreams weighed, that ever heard
Sad burdens echoing through the loudest throng;
She, the wild song of some May-merry bird;
I, but the listening maker of a song.

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Before the Robin

The noon hangs warm and still. Only the crow
Banters and chides with his importunate call
The world-wide silence resting over all.
Down by the hollow yonder, where the slow
Frail sheets of tremulous pools collect and grow,
A few bronzed cedars in their fading dress,
Almost asleep for happy weariness,
Lean their blue shadows on the puckered snow.
And as I listen, all my sense concealed
In the very core of silence, mirthfully still,
Where the first grass above the gleeting field
Lies bare and yellow on a tiny hill,
I hear the shore-lark in his search prolong
The little lonely welcome of his song.

In Absence

My love is far away from me to-night,
O spirits of sweet peace, kind destinies,
Watch over her, and breathe upon her eyes;
Keep near to her in every hurt's despite,
That no rude care or noisome dream affright.
So let her rest, so let her sink to sleep,
As little clouds that breast the sunset steep
Merge and melt out into the golden light.
My love is far away and I am grown
A very child, oppressed with formless glooms,
Some shadowy sadness with a name unknown
Haunts the chill twilight, and these silent rooms
Seem with vague fears and dim regrets astir,
Lonesome and strange and empty without her.

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The Frogs

I

Breathers of wisdom won without a quest,
Quaint uncouth dreamers, voices high and strange;
Flutists of lands where beauty hath no change,
And wintry grief is a forgotten guest,
Sweet murmurers of everlasting rest,
For whom glad days have ever yet to run,
And moments are as aeons, and the sun
But ever sunken half-way toward the west.
Often to me who heard you in your day,
With close rapt ears, it could not choose but seem
That earth, our mother, searching in what way
Men's hearts might know her spirit's inmost dream;
Ever at rest beneath life's change and stir,
Made you her soul, and bade you pipe for her.

II

In those mute days when spring was in her glee,
And hope was strong, we knew not why or how,
And earth, the mother, dreamed with brooding brow,
Musing on life, and what the hours might be,
When love should ripen to maternity,
Then like high flutes in silvery interchange
Ye piped with voices still and sweet and strange,
And ever as ye piped, on every tree
The great buds swelled; among the pensive woods
The spirits of first flowers awoke and flung
From buried faces the close-fitting hoods,
And listened to your piping till they fell,
The frail spring-beauty with her perfumed bell,
The wind-flower, and the spotted adder-tongue.

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III

All the day long, wherever pools might be
Among the golden meadows, where the air
Stood in a dream, as it were moorèd there
For ever in a noon-tide reverie,
Or where the birds made riot of their glee
In the still woods, and the hot sun shone down,
Crossed with warm lucent shadows on the brown
Leaf-paven pools, that bubbled dreamily,
Or far away in whispering river meads
And watery marshes where the brooding noon,
Full with the wonder of its own sweet boon,
Nestled and slept among the noiseless reeds,
Ye sat and murmured, motionless as they,
With eyes that dreamed beyond the night and day.

IV

And when day passed and over heaven's height,
Thin with the many stars and cool with dew,
The fingers of the deep hours slowly drew
The wonder of the ever-healing night,
No grief or loneliness or rapt delight
Or weight of silence ever brought to you
Slumber or rest; only your voices grew
More high and solemn; slowly with hushed flight
Ye saw the echoing hours go by, long-drawn,
Nor ever stirred, watching with fathomless eyes,
And with your countless clear antiphonies
Filling the earth and heaven, even till dawn,
Last-risen, found you with its first pale gleam,
Still with soft throats unaltered in your dream.

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V

And slowly as we heard you, day by day,
The stillness of enchanted reveries
Bound brain and spirit and half-closèd eyes,
In some divine sweet wonder-dream astray;
To us no sorrow or upreared dismay
Nor any discord came, but evermore
The voices of mankind, the outer roar,
Grew strange and murmurous, faint and far away.
Morning and noon and midnight exquisitely,
Rapt with your voices, this alone we knew,
Cities might change and fall, and men might die,
Secure were we, content to dream with you
That change and pain are shadows faint and fleet,
And dreams are real, and life is only sweet.

April Voices

To-day all throats are touched with life's full treasure;
Even the blackbirds in yon leafless tree,
Wheezing and squeaking in discordant glee,
Make shift to sing, and full of pensive pleasure
Here the bold robin sits and at his leisure
Whistles and warbles disconnectedly,
As if he were too happy and too free
To trim his notes and sing a perfect measure.
Across the steaming meadows all day long,
I hear the murmur of the frogs. In schools
Shy harping lizards pipe about the pools.
From hedge and roof and many a garden gate,
The cheery sparrow still repeats his song,
So clear, so silver sweet, and delicate.

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May

The broad earth smiles in open benison,
An emerald sea, whose waves of leaf and shade
On far-off shores of misty turquoise fade;
And all the host of life steers blithely on,
With joy for captain, fancy at the helm:
The woodpecker taps roundly at his tree,
The vaulting high-ho flings abroad his glee
In fluty laughter from the towering elm.
Here at my feet are violets, and below—
A gracile spirit tremulously alive—
Spring water fills a little greenish pool,
Paved all with mottled leaves and crystal cool.
Beyond it stands a plum-tree in full blow,
Creamy with bloom, and humming like a hive.

The Passing of Spring

No longer in the meadow coigns shall blow
The creamy blood-root in her suit of gray,
But all the first strange flowers have passed away,
Gone with the childlike dreams that touched us so;
April is spent, and summer soon shall go,
Swift as a shadow o'er the heads of men,
And autumn with the painted leaves; and then,
When fires are set, and windows blind with snow,
We shall remember, with a yearning pang,
How in the poplars the first robins sang,
The wind-flowers risen from their leafy cots,
When life was gay and spring was at the helm,
The maple full of little crimson knots,
And all that delicate blossoming of the elm.

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Evening

From upland slopes I see the cows file by,
Lowing, great-chested, down the homeward trail,
By dusking fields and meadows shining pale
With moon-tipped dandelions. Flickering high,
A peevish night-hawk in the western sky
Beats up into the lucent solitudes,
Or drops with griding wing. The stilly woods
Grow dark and deep, and gloom mysteriously.
Cool night winds creep, and whisper in mine ear.
The homely cricket gossips at my feet.
From far-off pools and wastes of reeds I hear,
Clear and soft-piped, the chanting frogs break sweet
In full Pandean chorus. One by one
Shine out the stars, and the great night comes on.

To Chaucer

'Twas high mid-spring, when thou wert here on earth,
Chaucer, and the new world was just begun;
For thee 'twas pastime and immortal mirth
To work and dream beneath the pleasant sun,
Full glorious were the hearty ways of man,
And God above was great and wise and good,
Thy soul sufficient for its earthly span,
Thy body brave and full of dancing blood.
Such was thy faith, O master! We believe
Neither in God, numanity, nor self;
Even the votaries of place and pelf
Pass by firm-footed, while we build and weave
With doubt and restless care. Too well we see
The drop of life lost in eternity.

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The Song Sparrow

Fair little scout, that when the iron year
Changes, and the first fleecy clouds deploy,
Comest with such a sudden burst of joy,
Lifting on winter's doomed and broken rear
That song of silvery triumph blithe and clear;
Not yet quite conscious of the happy glow,
We hungered for some surer touch, and lo!
One morning we awake and thou art here.
And thousands of frail-stemmed hepaticas,
With their crisp leaves and pure and perfect hues,
Light sleepers, ready for the golden news,
Spring at thy note beside the forest ways—
Next to thy song, the first to deck the hour—
The classic lyrist and the classic flower.

Nesting Time

The bees are busy in their murmurous search,
The birds are putting up their woven frames,
And all the twigs and branches of the birch
Are shooting into tiny emerald flames:
The maple leaves are spreading slowly out
Like small red hats, or pointed parasols.
The high-ho flings abroad his merry shout,
The veery from the inner brushwood calls:
The gold-green poplar, jocund as may be,
The sunshine in its laughing heart receives,
And shimmers in the wind innumerably
Through all its host of little lacquered leaves.
And lo! the bob-o-link—he soars and sings,
With all the heart of summer in his wings.

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At Dusk

Already o'er the west the first star shines,
And day and dark are imperceptibly linked;
The fences and pied fields grow indistinct,
Deep beyond deep the living light declines,
Still lingering o'er the westward mountain lines,
Pallid and clear; and on its silent breast
A symbol of eternal quiet rest,
Far and black-plumed, the imperturbable pines.
A few thin threads of purple clouds still float
In the serene ether, and the night wind,
Wandering in puffs from off the darkening hill,
Breathes warm or cool; and now the whip-poor-will,
Beyond the river margins glassed and thinned,
Whips the cool hollows with his liquid note.

Beauty

Only the things of Beauty shall endure.
While man goes woeful, wasting his brief day,
From Truth and Love and Nature far astray,
Lo! Beauty, the lost goal, the unsought cure;
For how can he whom Beauty hath made sure,
Who hath her law and sovereign creed by heart,
Be proud, or pitiless, play the tyrant's part,
Be false, or envious, greedy or impure.
Nay! she will gift him with a golden key
To unlock every virtue. Name not ye,
As once, "the good, the beautiful, the true,"
For these are but three names for one sole thing;
Or rather Beauty is the perfect ring
That circles and includes the other two.

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To the Warbling Vireo

Sweet little prattler, whom the morning sun
Found singing, and this livelong summer day
Keeps warbling still: here have I dreamed away
Two bright and happy hours, that passed like one,
Lulled by thy silvery converse, just begun
And never ended. Thou dost preach to me
Sweet patience and her guest, reality,
The sense of days, and weeks, and months that run
Scarce altering in their round of happiness,
And quiet thoughts, and toils that do not kill,
And homely pastimes. Though the old distress
Loom gray above us both at times, ah, still,
Be constant to thy woodland note, sweet bird;
By me at least thou shalt be loved and heard.

In the Pine Groves

I

Here is a quiet place where one may dream
The hours away and be content. It shines
With many a shadow spot and golden gleam
Under the murmur of these priestly pines.
About the level russet-matted floor,
Each like a star in his appointed station,
The sole-flowered scented pyrolas by the score
Stand with heads drooped in fragrant meditation.
The pensive thrush, the hermit of the wood,
Dreams far within, and piping at his leisure,
Tells to the hills the forest's inmost mood
Of memory and its solitary pleasure.
Earth only and sun are here, and shadow and trees
And thoughts that are eternal even as these.

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II

Almost till noon I kept the weary road,
Amid the dust and din of passing teams,
With a soul shaped to its accustomed load
Of silly cares and microscopic dreams:
But here a nobler influence is unfurled;
It is no more the present petty hour,
But Time, and all the pine-groves of the world
Enfold my spirit in their pensive power.
Behold this little speedwell: Time shall flow,
Customs and commonwealths and faiths shall pass,
And be as they had never been; not so
The little pale blue speedwell in the grass,
Whatever change shall fall of good or ill,
Grave eyes shall mark the little speedwell still.

Voices of Earth

We have not heard the music of the spheres,
The song of star to star, but there are sounds
More deep than human joy and human tears,
That Nature uses in her common rounds;
The fall of streams, the cry of winds that strain
The oak, the roaring of the sea's surge, might
Of thunder breaking afar off, or rain
That falls by minutes in the summer night.
These are the voices of earth's secret soul,
Uttering the mystery from which she came.
To him who hears them grief beyond control,
Or joy inscrutable without a name,
Wakes in his heart thoughts bedded there, impearled,
Before the birth and making of the world.

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A Sunset at Les Eboulements

Broad shadows fall. On all the mountain side
The scythe-swept fields are silent. Slowly home
By the long beach the high-piled hay-carts come,
Splashing the pale salt shallows. Over wide
Fawn-coloured wastes of mud the slipping tide,
Round the dun rocks and wattled fisheries,
Creeps murmuring in. And now by twos and threes,
O'er the slow spreading pools with clamorous chide,
Belated crows from strip to strip take flight.
Soon will the first star shine; yet ere the night
Reach onward to the pale-green distances,
The sun's last shaft beyond the gray sea-floor
Still dreams upon the Kamouraska shore,
And the long line of golden villages.

To the Ottawa River

O slave, whom many a cunning master drills
To lift, or carry, bind, or crush, or churn,
Whose dammed and parcelled waters drive or turn
The saws and hammers of a hundred mills,
Yet hath thy strength for our rebellious ills
A counsel brave, a message sweet and stern,
Uttered for them that have the heart to learn:
Yea to the dwellers in the rocky hills,
The folk of cities, and the farthest tracts,
There comes above the human cry for gold
The thunder of thy chutes and cataracts:
And lo! contemptuous of the driver's hold,
Thou movest under all thy servile pacts
Full-flowing, fair, and stately as of old.

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To the Ottawa

Dear dark-brown waters full of all the stain
Of sombre spruce-woods and the forest fens,
Laden with sound from far-off northern glens
Where winds and craggy cataracts complain,
Voices of streams and mountain pines astrain,
The pines that brood above the roaring foam
Of La Montagne or Des Erables; thine home
Is distant yet, a shelter far to gain.
Aye still to eastward, past the shadowy lake
And the long slopes of Rigaud toward the sun,
The mightier stream, thy comrade, waits for thee,
The beryl waters that espouse and take
Thine in their deep embrace, and bear thee on
In that great bridal journey to the sea.

Temagami

Far in the grim Northwest beyond the lines
That turn the rivers eastward to the sea,
Set with a thousand islands, crowned with pines,
Lies the deep water, wild Temagami:
Wild for the hunter's roving, and the use
Of trappers in its dark and trackless vales,
Wild with the tramping of the giant moose,
And the weird magic of old Indian tales.
All day with steady paddles toward the west
Our heavy-laden long canoe we pressed:
All day we saw the thunder-travelled sky
Purpled with storm in many a trailing tress,
And saw at eve the broken sunset die
In crimson on the silent wilderness.

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Wayagamack

Beautiful are thy hills, Wayagamack,
Thy depths of lonely rock, thine endless piles
Of grim birch forest and thy spruce-dark isles,
Thy waters fathomless and pure and black,
But golden where the gravel meets the sun,
And beautiful thy twilight solitude,
The gloom that gathers over lake and wood
A weirder silence when the day is done.
For ever wild, too savage for the plough,
Thine austere beauty thou canst never lose.
Change shall not mar thy loneliness, nor tide
Of human trespass trouble thy repose,
The Indian's paddle and the hunter's stride
Shall jar thy dream, and break thy peace enow.

On Lake Temiscamingue

A single dreamy elm, that stands between
The sombre forest and the wan-lit lake,
Halves with its slim gray stem and pendent green
The shadowed point. Beyond it without break
Bold brows of pine-topped granite bend away,
Far to the southward, fading off in grand
Soft folds of looming purple. Cool and gray,
The point runs out, a blade of thinnest sand.
Two rivers meet beyond it: wild and clear,
Their deepening thunder breaks upon the ear—
The one descending from its forest home
By many an eddied pool and murmuring fall—
The other cloven through the mountain wall,
A race of tumbled rocks, a roar of foam.

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A Morning Summons

Upon the outer verge of sleep I heard
A little sparrow piping in the morn;
Upon my very heart the sound was borne;
It seemed to me a something more than bird,
Even Nature's self that touched me with a word:—
"While thou sleepest on, I have not done my duty.
Awake, O man! Of all this gift of beauty
Lose not one grain. The forest deeps are stirred
With morning, and the brooks are loud aflow."
Perhaps it was a dream, but this I know,
Behind me, as I passed into the sun,
Whether to me or each one to his mate,
I heard the little sparrows one by one
Piping in triumph at my garden gate.

After the Shower

The shower is past, ere it hath well begun.
The enormous clouds are rolling up like steam
Into the illimitable blue. They gleam
In summits of banked snow against the sun.
The old dry beds begin to laugh and run,
As if 'twere spring. The trees in the wind's stir
Shower down great drops, and every gossamer
Glitters a net of diamonds fresh-spun.
The happy flowers put on a spritelier grace,
Star-flower and smilacina creamy-hued,
With little spires of honey-scent and light,
And that small, dainty violet, pure and white,
That holds by magic in its twisted face
The heart of all the perfumes of the wood.

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A Midnight Landscape

A great black cloud from heaven's midmost height
Hangs all to eastward roofing half the world,
Whereunder in vast shadow stretches furled
A waste, meseems, where never leaf nor light
Might be, but only darkness infinite,
Where the lost heroes of old dreams oppressed
Might still be wandering on some dolorous quest,
A land of witchcraft and accursed blight.
Lapping the border of that huge distress,
A pallid stream from valleys gnarled and dim
Comes creeping with a Stygian silentness;
While yonder southward at the cloud's last rim
Antares from the Scorpion burns afar,
With surge and baleful gleam, the fierce red star!

Solitude

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
Even this little brook, that runs at ease,
Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
Seems but to deepen, with its curling thread
Of sound, the shadowy sun-pierced silences.
Sometimes a hawk screams or a woodpecker
Startles the stillness from its fixèd mood
With his loud careless tap. Sometimes I hear
The dreamy white-throat from some far off tree
Pipe slowly on the listening solitude,
His five pure notes succeeding pensively.

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Across the Pea-Fields

Field upon field to westward hum and shine
The gray-green sun-drenched mists of blossoming peas;
Beyond them are great elms and poplar trees
That guard the noon-stilled farm-yards, groves of pine,
And long dark fences muffled thick with vine;
Then the high city, murmurous with mills;
And last, upon the sultry west, blue hills,
Misty, far-lifted, a mere filmy line.
Across these blackening rails into the light
I lean and listen, lolling drowsily;
On the fence corner, yonder to the right,
A red squirrel whisks and chatters; nearer by
A little old brown woman on her knees
Searches the deep hot grass for strawberries.

In the Wilds

We run with rushing streams that toss and spume;
We speed or dream upon the open meres;
The pine-woods fold us in their pungent gloom;
The thunder of wild waters fills our ears;
The rain we take, we take the beating sun;
The stars are cold above our heads at night;
On the rough earth we lie when day is done,
And slumber even in the storm's despite.
The savage vigour of the forest creeps
Into our veins, and laughs upon our lips;
The warm blood kindles from forgotten deeps,
And surges tingling to the finger tips.
The deep-pent life awakes and bursts its bands;
We feel the strength and goodness of our hands.

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A Summer Evening

The clouds grow clear, the pine-wood glooms and stills
With brown reflections in the silent bay,
And far beyond the pale blue-misted hills
The rose and purple evening dreams away.
The thrush, the veery, from mysterious dales
Rings his last round; and outward like a sea
The shining, shadowy heart of heaven unveils
The starry legend of eternity.
The day's long troubles lose their sting and pass.
Peaceful the world, and peaceful grows my heart.
The gossip cricket from the friendly grass
Talks of old joys and takes the dreamer's part.
Then night, the healer, with unnoticed breath,
And sleep, dark sleep, so near, so like to death.

An Old Lesson From the Fields

Even as I watched the daylight how it sped
From noon till eve, and saw the light wind pass
In long pale waves across the flashing grass,
And heard through all my dreams, wherever led,
The thin cicada singing overhead,
I felt what joyance all this nature has,
And saw myself made clear as in a glass,
How that my soul was for the most part dead.
O light, I cried, and heaven, with all your blue,
O earth, with all your sunny fruitfulness,
And ye, tall lilies, of the wind-vexed field,
What power and beauty life indeed might yield,
Could we but cast away its conscious stress,
Simple of heart becoming even as you.

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The City

Beyond the dusky cornfields, towards the west,
Dotted with farms, beyond the shallow stream,
Through drifts of elm with quiet peep and gleam,
Curved white and slender as a lady's wrist,
Faint and far off out of the autumn mist,
Even as a pointed jewel softly set
In clouds of colour warmer, deeper yet,
Crimson and gold and rose and amethyst,
Toward dayset, where the journeying sun grown old
Hangs lowly westward darker now than gold,
With the soft sun-touch of the yellowing hours
Made lovelier, I see with dreaming eyes,
Even as a dream out of a dream, arise
The bell-tongued city with its glorious towers.

A Dawn on the Lievre

Up the dark-valleyed river stroke by stroke
We drove the water from the rustling blade;
And when the night was almost gone we made
The Oxbow bend; and there the dawn awoke;
Full on the shrouded night-charged river broke
The sun, down the long mountain valley rolled,
A sudden swinging avalanche of gold,
Through mists that sprang and reeled aside like smoke.
And lo! before us, toward the east upborne,
Packed with curled forest, bunched and topped with pine,
Brow beyond brow, drawn deep with shade and shine,
The mount; upon whose golden sunward side,
Still threaded with the melting mist, the morn
Sat like some glowing conqueror satisfied.

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A Niagara Landscape

Heavy with haze that merges and melts free
Into the measureless depth on either hand,
The full day rests upon the luminous land
In one long noon of golden reverie.
Now hath the harvest come and gone with glee.
The shaven fields stretch smooth and clean away,
Purple and green, and yellow, and soft gray,
Chequered with orchards. Farther still I see
Towns and dim villages, whose roof-tops fill
The distant mist, yet scarcely catch the view.
Thorold set sultry on its plateaued hill,
And far to westward, where yon pointed towers
Rise faint and ruddy from the vaporous blue,
Saint Catharines, city of the host of flowers.

By the Sea

At morn beside the ocean's foamy roar
I walked soft-shadowed through the luminous mist,
And saw not clearly, sea or land, nor wist
Where the tide stayed, nor where began the shore.
A gentle seaward wind came down, and bore
The scent of roses and of bay-berry;
And through the great gray veil that hid the sea
Broke the pale sun—a silvery warmth—not more.
So through the fogs that cover all this life
I walk as in a dream 'twixt sea and land—
The meadows of wise thought, the sea of strife—
And sounds and happy scents from either hand
Come with vast gleams that spread and softly shine.
The joy of life, the energy divine.

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To the Cricket

Didst thou not tease and fret me to and fro,
Sweet spirit of this summer-circled field,
With that quiet voice of thine that would not yield
Its meaning, though I mused and sought it so?
But now I am content to let it go,
To lie at length and watch the swallows pass,
As blithe and restful as this quiet grass,
Content only to listen and to know
That years shall turn, and summers yet shall shine,
And I shall lie beneath these swaying trees,
Still listening thus; haply at last to seize,
And render in some happier vĕrse divine
That friendly, homely, haunting speech of thine,
That perfect utterance of content and ease.

Sorrow

At last I fell asleep, and a sweet dream,
For respite and for peace, was given to me;
But in the dawn I wakened suddenly,
And like a fiery swift and stinging stream
Returned, with fear and horror, the supreme
Remembrance of my sorrow. All my mind
Grew hot within me. As one sick and blind,
Round and still round an old and fruitless theme,
I toiled, nor saw the golden morning light,
Nor heard the sparrows singing, but the sweat
Beaded my brow and made my pillow wet.
So seared and withered as a plant with blight,
Eaten by passion, stripped of all my pride,
I wished that somehow then I might have died.

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Midsummer Night

Mother of balms and soothings manifold,
Quiet-breathed night whose brooding hours are seven,
To whom the voices of all rest are given,
And those few stars whose scattered names are told,
Far off beyond the westward hills outrolled,
Darker than thou, more still, more dreamy even,
The golden moon leans in the dusky heaven,
And under her one star—a point of gold:
And all go slowly lingering toward the west,
As we go down forgetfully to our rest,
Weary of daytime, tired of noise and light:
Ah, it was time that thou should'st come; for we
Were sore athirst, and had great need of thee,
Thou sweet physician, balmy-bosomed night.

Perfect Love

Belovèd, those who moan of love's brief day
Shall find but little grace with me, I guess,
Who know too well this passion's tenderness
To deem that it shall lightly pass away,
A moment's interlude in life's dull play;
Though many loves have lingered to distress,
So shall not ours, sweet Lady, ne'ertheless,
But deepen with us till both heads be gray.
For perfect love is like a fair green plant,
That fades not with its blossoms, but lives on,
And gentle lovers shall not come to want,
Though fancy with its first mad dream be gone;
Sweet is the flower, whose radiant glory flies,
But sweeter still the green that never dies.

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The Loons

Once ye were happy, once by many a shore,
Wherever Glooscap's gentle feet might stray,
Lulled by his presence like a dream, ye lay
Floating at rest; but that was long of yore.
He was too good for earthly men; he bore
Their bitter deeds for many a patient day,
And then at last he took his unseen way.
He was your friend, and ye might rest no more:
And now, though many hundred altering years
Have passed, among the desolate northern meres
Still must ye search and wander querulously,
Crying for Glooscap, still bemoan the light
With weird entreaties, and in agony
With awful laughter pierce the lonely night.

Night in the Wilderness

The good fire-ranger is our friend to-night;
We sit before his tent, and watch his fire
Send up its fount of sailing sparks that light
The ruddy pine-stems. Hands that never tire
Our friend's are, as he spreads his frugal store,
And cooks his bouillon with a hunter's pride,
Till, warm with woodland fare and forest lore
We sink at last to sleep. On every side,
A grim mysterious presence, vast and old,
The forest stretches leagues on leagues away,
With lonely rivers running dark and cold,
And many a gloomy lake and haunted bay.
The stars above the pines are sharp and still.
The wind scarce moves. An owl hoots from the hill.

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Among the Orchards

Already in the dew-wrapped vineyards dry
Dense weights of heat press down. The large bright drops
Shrink in the leaves. From dark acacia tops
The nut-hatch flings his short reiterate cry;
And ever as the sun mounts hot and high
Thin voices crowd the grass. In soft long strokes
The wind goes murmuring through the mountain oaks.
Faint wefts creep out along the blue and die.
I hear far in among the motionless trees—
Shadows that sleep upon the shaven sod—
The thud of dropping apples. Reach on reach
Stretch plots of perfumed orchard, where the bees
Murmur among the full-fringed goldenrod
Or cling half-drunken to the rotting peach.

A Thunderstorm

A moment the wild swallows like a flight
Of withered gust-caught leaves, serenely high,
Toss in the windrack up the muttering sky.
The leaves hang still. Above the weird twilight,
The hurrying centres of the storm unite
And spreading with huge trunk and rolling fringe,
Each wheeled upon its own tremendous hinge,
Tower darkening on. And now from heaven's height,
With the long roar of elm-trees swept and swayed,
And pelted waters, on the vanished plain
Plunges the blast. Behind the wild white flash
That splits abroad the pealing thunder-crash,
Over bleared fields and gardens disarrayed,
Column on column comes the drenching rain.

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Xenophanes

While knowledge and high wisdom yet were young,
Through Sicily of old, from tryst to tryst,
Wandered with sad-set brow and eloquent tongue,
The melancholy, austere rhapsodist:
"All my life long," he cried, "by many ways
I follow truth where devious footmarks fall;
Now I am old, and still my spirit strays,
Mocked and eluded, lost amid the All."
That was Mind's youth, and ages long ago,
And still thine hunger, O Xenophanes,
Preys on the hearts of men; and to and fro,
They probe the same implacable mysteries:
The same vast toils oppress them, and they bear
The same unquenchable hope, the same despair.

Euphrone

O soft-cheeked mother, O belovèd night,
Dispeller of black thoughts and mortal dreads,
Drowner of sorrows. In how many beds,
Betwixt the evening and the dawning light,
Thy tenderness, thy pity infinite,
Hath it not poured nepenthe, soft as rain,
On thankful lids that have forgotten pain,
Forgotten grief, forgotten care and spite!
How many lovers also side by side,
After long waiting such a weary while,
Now with arms locked, cheeks touching, satisfied,
Sleep, and their one great hour returns to thee,
On these too dost thou not incline thy smile,
Tender with welcome, Mother Euphrone?

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Stoic and Hedonist

The cup of knowledge emptied to its lees,
Soft dreamers in a perfumed atmosphere,
Ye turn, and from your luminous reveries
Follow with curious eyes and biting sneer
Yon grave-eyed men, to whom alone are sweet
Strength and self-rule, who move with stately tread,
And reck not if the earth beneath your feet
With bitter herb or blossoming rose be spread.
Ye smile and frown, and yet for all your art,
Supple and shining as the ringèd snake,
And all your knowledge, all your grace of heart,
Is there not one thing missing from your make—
The thing that is life's acme, and its key—
The stoic's grander portion—Dignity.

Thamyris

I

Œchalian Eurytus in his hall
Held feast; and, charged with triumph and with wine,
Wrought to a glowing madness half divine,
The Thracian Thamyris sang, and held in thrall
The kings and leaning heroes, each and all;
And there he challenged, standing with raised head,
The Zeus-born Muses, offering, void of dread,
To meet and match them in the song, nor fall
In aught behind, nor yield the mastery;
But him, when his great spirit seemed most strong,
Leading at cool of dawn their sacred round,
The vengeful daughters of Mnemosyne
In the gray gorges near Eurotas found,
And made him blind, and took away his song.

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II

Now by the gate at Argos, where the way
Brings all the traffic in from Argolis,
Gray-haired and full of grief, sits Thamyris,
Blind; and his numbed and witless fingers stray
Among the broken harp-strings—so men say—
And ever, when feet pass, he lifts his eyes,
Sightless and robbed of all their fire, and cries
With a great warning twenty times a day:
"The proud and boastful man who grasps a crown
For his own greatness, him the gods strike down.
Heroes and Bards know that it is not ye
That make yourselves, but a god gave it you;
Therefore walk heedfully, holding as is due
Your sacred gift with thankful mind in fee."

The King's Sabbath

Once idly in his hall King Olave sat
Pondering, and with his dagger whittled chips;
And one drew near to him with austere lips,
Saying, "To-morrow is Monday," and at that
The king said nothing, but held forth his flat
Broad palm, and bending on his mighty hips,
Took up and mutely laid thereon the slips
Of scattered wood, as on a hearth, and gat
From off the embers near, a burning brand.
Kindling the pile with this, the dreaming Dane
Sat silent with his eyes set and his bland
Proud mouth, tight-woven, smiling, drawn with pain,
Watching the fierce fire flare, and wax, and wane,
Hiss and burn down upon his shrivelled hand.

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The Death of Tennyson

They tell that when his final hour drew near,
He whose fair praise the ages shall rehearse,
Whom now the living and the dead hold dear;
Our gray-haired master of immortal verse,
Called for his Shakespeare, and with touch of rue
Turned to that page in stormy Cymbeline
That bears the dirge. Whether he read none knew,
But on the book he laid his hand serene,
And kept it there unshaken, till there fell
The last gray change, and from before his eyes,
This glorious world that Shakespeare loved so well,
Slowly, as at a beck, without surprise—
Its woe, its pride, its passion, and its play—
Like mists and melting shadows passed away.

The Autumn Waste

There is no break in all the wide gray sky,
Nor light on any field, and the wind grieves
And talks of death. Where cold gray waters lie
Round grayer stones, and the new-fallen leaves
Heap the chill hollows of the naked woods,
A lisping moan, an inarticulate cry,
Creeps far among the charnel solitudes,
Numbing the waste with mindless misery.
In these bare paths, these melancholy lands,
What dream, or flesh, could ever have been young?
What lovers have gone forth with linkèd hands?
What flowers could ever have bloomed, what birds have sung?
Life, hopes, and human things seem wrapped away,
With shrouds and spectres, in one long decay.

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Indian Summer

The old gray year is near his term in sooth,
And now with backward eye and soft-laid palm
Awakens to a golden dream of youth,
A second childhood lovely and most calm,
And the smooth hour about his misty head
An awning of enchanted splendour weaves,
Of maples, amber, purple, and rose-red,
And droop-limbed elms down-dropping golden leaves.
With still half-fallen lids he sits and dreams
Far in a hollow of the sunlit wood,
Lulled by the murmur of thin-threading streams,
Nor sees the polar armies overflood
The darkening barriers of the hills, nor hears
The north-wind ringing with a thousand spears.

Autumn Maples

The thoughts of all the maples who shall name,
When the sad landscape turns to cold and gray?
Yet some for very ruth and sheer dismay,
Hearing the northwind pipe the winter's name,
Have fired the hills with beaconing clouds of flame;
And some with softer woe that day by day,
So sweet and brief, should go the westward way,
Have yearned upon the sunset with such shame
That all their cheeks have turned to tremulous rose;
Others for wrath have turned a rusty red,
And some that knew not either grief or dread,
Ere the old year should find its iron close,
Have gathered down the sun's last smiles acold,
Deep, deep, into their luminous hearts of gold.

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Goldenrod

Ere the stout year be waxèd shrewd and old,
And while the grain upon the well-piled stack
Waits yet unthreshed, by every woodland track,
Low stream, and meadow, and wide waste outrolled,
By every fence that skirts the forest mould,
Sudden and thick, as at the reaper's hail,
They come, companions of the harvest, frail
Green forests yellowing upward into gold.
Lo, where yon shaft of level sunshine gleams
Full on those pendent wreathes, those bounteous plumes
So gracious and so golden! Mark them well,
The last and best from summer's empty looms,
Her benedicite, and dream of dreams,
The fulness of her soul made visible.

The Ruin of the Year

Along the hills and by the sleeping stream
A warning falls, and all the glorious trees—
Vestures of gold and grand embroideries—
Stand mute, as in a sad and beautiful dream,
Brooding on death and Nature's vast undoing,
And spring that came an age ago and fled,
And summer's splendour long since drawn to head,
And now the fall and all the slow soft ruin:
And soon some day comes by the pillaging wind,
The winter's wild outrider, with harsh roar,
And leaves the meadows sacked and waste and thinned,
And strips the forest of its golden store;
Till the grim tyrant comes, and then they sow
The silent wreckage, not with salt, but snow.

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Storm Voices

The night grows old; again and yet again
The tempest wakens round the whistling height,
And all the winds like loosened hounds take flight
With bay and halloo, and the wintry rain
Sweeps the drenched roof, and blears the narrow pane.
There is a surging horror in the night;
The woods far out are roaring in their might;
The curtains sway; the rafters creak and strain:
And as I dream, o'er all my spirit swims
A passion sad and holy as the tomb;
Strange human voices cry into mine ear;
Out of the vexèd dark I seem to hear
Vast organ thunders, and a burst of hymns
That swell and soar in some cathedral gloom.

Late November

The hills and leafless forests slowly yield
To the thick-driving snow. A little while
And night shall darken down. In shouting file
The woodmen's carts go by me homeward-wheeled,
Past the thin fading stubbles, half concealed,
Now golden-gray, sowed softly through with snow,
Where the last ploughman follows still his row,
Turning black furrows through the whitening field.
Far off the village lamps begin to gleam,
Fast drives the snow, and no man comes this way;
The hills grow wintry white, and bleak winds moan
About the naked uplands. I alone
Am neither sad, nor shelterless, nor gray,
Wrapped round with thought, content to watch and dream.

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Earth—The Stoic

Earth, like a goblet empty of delight,
Empty of summer and balm-breathing hours,
Empty of music, empty of all flowers,
Now with that other draught of death and night
And loss, and iron bitterness refills.
The upland rifts are gleaming white with snow
The north wind pipes, the forest groans below,
The clouds are heaping grandly on the hills.
Yet thou complainest not, O steadfast Earth,
Beautiful mother with thy stoic fields;
In all the ages since thy fiery birth
Deep in thine own wide heart thou findest still
Whatever comforts and whatever shields,
And plannest also for us the same sheer will.

The Spirit of the House

These four gray walls are but the bodily shell,
Whereof my lady of the brave blue eyes
Is the immortal soul. All sweet replies
And viewless records of a touch known well
That like the tone within a golden bell
Pervade them with a gentle atmosphere,
These things are just herself—she being here—
The breath that makes the rose-tree sweet to smell.
Through sunshine, and gray shadow, and through gloom,
With mirth and gracious courage for her ways,
And goodness ever forth, but never spent,
She passes with light hands from room to room,
And beauty grows before her, and the days
Are full, and quietly rounded, and content.

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Sirius

The old night waned, and all the purple dawn
Grew pale with green and opal. The wide earth
Lay darkling and strange and silent as at birth,
Save for a single far-off brightness drawn
Of water gray as steel. The silver bow
Of broad Orion still pursued the night,
And farther down, amid the gathering light,
A great star leaped and smouldered. Standing so,
I dreamed myself in Denderah by the Nile;
Beyond the hall of columns and the crowd
And the vast pylons, I beheld afar
The goddess gleam, and saw the morning smile,
And lifting both my hands, I cried aloud
In joy to Hathor, smitten by her star!

The March of Winter

They that have gone by forest paths shall hear
The outcry of worn reeds and leaves long shed,
The rise and sound of waters. Overhead,
Out of the wide northwest, wind-stripped and clear,
Like some great army dense with battle gear,
All day the columned clouds come marching on,
Long hastening lines in sombre unison,
Vanguard, and centre, and still deepening rear;
While from the waste beyond the barren verge
Drives the great wind with hoof and thong set free,
And buffets and wields high its whistling scourge
Around the roofs, or in tempestuous glee,
Over the far-off woods with tramp and surge,
Huge and deep-tongued, goes roaring like the sea.

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Winter-Thought

The wind-swayed daisies, that on every side
Throng the wide fields in whispering companies,
Serene and gently smiling like the eyes
Of tender children long beatified,
The delicate thought-wrapped buttercups that glide
Like sparks of fire above the wavering grass,
And swing and toss with all the airs that pass,
Yet seem so peaceful, so preoccupied;
These are the emblems of pure pleasures flown,
I scarce can think of pleasure without these.
Even to dream of them is to disown
The cold forlorn midwinter reveries,
Lulled with the perfume of old hopes new-blown,
No longer dreams, but dear realities.

A January Morning

The glittering roofs are still with frost; each worn
Black chimney builds into the quiet sky
Its curling pile to crumble silently.
Far out to westward on the edge of morn,
The slender misty city towers up-borne
Glimmer faint rose against the pallid blue;
And yonder on those northern hills, the hue
Of amethyst, hang fleeces dull as horn.
And here behind me come the woodmen's sleighs
With shouts and clamorous squeakings; might and main
Up the steep slope the horses stamp and strain,
Urged on by hoarse-tongued drivers—cheeks ablaze,
Iced beards and frozen eyelids—team by team,
With frost-fringed flanks, and nostrils jetting steam.

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A Forest Path in Winter

Along this secret and forgotten road
All depths and forest forms, above, below,
Are plumed and draped and hillocked with the snow.
A branch cracks now and then, and its soft load
Drifts by me in a thin prismatic shower;
Else not a sound, but vistas bound and crossed
With sheeted gleams and sharp blue shadows, frost,
And utter silence. In his glittering power
The master of mid-winter reveries
Holds all things buried soft and strong and deep.
The busy squirrel has his hidden lair;
And even the spirits of the stalwart trees
Have crept into their utmost roots, and there,
Upcoiled in the close earth, lie fast asleep.

The Cup of Life

One after one the high emotions fade:
Time's wheeling measure empties and refills
Year after year; we seek no more the hills
That lured our youth divine and unafraid,
But swarming on some common highway, made
Beaten and smooth, plod onward with blind feet
And only where the crowded crossways meet
We halt and question, anxious and dismayed.
Yet can we not escape it; some we know
Have angered and grown mad, some scornfully laughed;
Yet surely to each lip—to mine to thine—
Comes with strange scent and pallid poisonous glow
The cup of Life, that dull Circean draught,
That taints us all, and turns the half to swine.

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After Mist

Last night there was a mist. Pallid and chill
The yellow moon-blur clove the thickening sky,
And all night long a gradual wind crept by,
And froze the fog, and with minutest skill
Fringed it and forked it, adding bead to bead,
In spears, and feathery tufts, and delicate hems
Round windward trunks, and all the topmost stems,
And every bush, and every golden weed;
And now upon the meadows silvered through
And forests frosted to their farthest pines—
A last faint gleam upon the misty blue—
The magic of the morning falls and shines,
A creamy splendour on a dim white world,
Broidered with violet, crystalled and impearled.

Passion

As slowly on a mountain slope toward spring
The soft snows gather week by week, and charge
The peaks and slanted ridges smooth and large
With drifts that hang light-poised and glistening:
Then sharply on the hidden key by chance
An echo strikes, and like a storm unpinned,
Down from a hundred ledges light as wind,
Loosens and shouts the thundering avalanche.
So in the soul our passions year by year
By the cool winds of custom banked and rolled,
Gather and deftly balance, and hang clear:
Then on the inner master-chord one day
Some fateful shock intrudes, and all gives way
In wild descent and ruin manifold.

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Falling Asleep

Slowly my thoughts lost hold on consciousness
Like waves that urge but cannot reach the shore:
Once and again I wakened and once more
The wind sighed in, and with a lingering stress
Brushed the loose blinds. Out of some far recess
There came the stealthy creaking of a door
The mice ran scuffling underneath the floor;
And then when all the house stood motionless,
Something dropped sharply overhead; a deep
Dead silence followed; only half aware,
I groped and strove to waken and fell flat;
A moment after, step by step, a cat
Came plumping softly down the attic stair;
And then I turned and then I fell asleep.

Virtue

I deem that virtue but a thing of straw
That is not self-subsistent, needs the press
Of sharp-eyed custom, or the point of law
To teach it honour, justice, gentleness.
His soul is but a shadow who does well
Through lure of gifts or terror of the rod,
Some painted paradise or pictured hell,
Not for the love but for the fear of God.
Him only do I honour in whom right,
Not the sour product of some grudged control,
Flows from a Godlike habit, whose clear soul,
Bathed in the noontide of an inward light,
In its own strength and beauty is secure,
Too proud to lie, too proud to be impure.

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The Modern Politician

What manner of soul is his to whom high truth
Is but the plaything of a feverish hour,
A dangling ladder to the ghost of power!
Gone are the grandeurs of the world's iron youth,
When kings were mighty, being made by swords.
Now comes the transit age, the age of brass,
When clowns into the vacant empires pass,
Blinding the multitude with specious words.
To them faith, kinship, truth and verity,
Man's sacred rights and every holiest thing,
Are but the counters at a desperate play,
Flippant and reckless what the end may be,
So that they glitter, each his little day,
The little mimic of a vanished king.

To a Millionaire

The world in gloom and splendour passes by,
And thou in the midst of it with brows that gleam,
A creature of that old distorted dream
That makes the sound of life an evil cry.
Good men perform just deeds, and brave men die,
And win not honour such as gold can give,
While the vain multitudes plod on, and live,
And serve the curse that pins them down: But I
Think only of the unnumbered broken hearts,
The hunger and the mortal strife for bread,
Old age and youth alike mistaught, misfed,
By want and rags and homelessness made vile,
The griefs and hates, and all the meaner parts
That balance thy one grim misgotten pile.

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The Pilot

The skilful pilot from the windy prow
Watches far off the markings of the sea,
And knows, long-studied in its charactery,
What rocks, what shoals, what currents hide below.
This can the skilful pilot do, with brow
Serene and certain; but not so to me
That mouth, those eyes, a subtler mystery,
Yield up the secrets of the heart. I know,
Poring upon the soul-chart of your face,
That all my searching, all my skill are vain.
I do but follow on some broken trace,
And please myself with guessing. Joy concurs
With grief, but neither can the script explain,
So veiled and various are the characters.

The Martyrs

O ye, who found in men's brief ways no sign
Of strength or help, so cast them forth, and threw
Your whole souls up to One ye deemed most true,
Nor failed nor doubted but held fast your line,
Seeing before you that divine face shine;
Shall we not mourn, when yours are now so few,
Those sterner days, when all men yearned to you,
White souls whose beauty made their world divine:
Yet still across life's tangled storms we see,
Following the Cross, your pale procession led,
One hope, one end, all others sacrificed,
Self-abnegation, love, humility,
Your faces shining toward the bended head,
The wounded hands and patient feet of Christ.

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The Truth

Friend, though thy soul should burn thee, yet be still.
Thoughts were not meant for strife, nor tongues for swords.
He that sees clear is gentlest of his words,
And that's not truth that hath the heart to kill.
The whole world's thought shall not one truth fulfil.
Dull in our age, and passionate in youth,
No mind of man hath found the perfect truth,
Nor shalt thou find it; therefore, friend, be still.
Watch and be still, nor hearken to the fool,
The babbler of consistency and rule:
Wisest is he, who, never quite secure,
Changes his thoughts for better day by day:
Tomorrow some new light will shine, be sure,
And thou shalt see thy thought another way.

The Poets

Half god, half brute, within the self-same shell,
Changers with every hour from dawn till even,
Who dream with angels in the gate of heaven,
And skirt with curious eyes the brinks of hell,
Children of Pan, whom some, the few, love well,
But most draw back, and know not what to say,
Poor shining angels, whom the hoofs betray,
Whose pinions frighten with their goatish smell.
Half brutish, half divine, but all of earth,
Half-way 'twixt hell and heaven, near to man,
The whole world's tangle gathered in one span,
Full of this human torture and this mirth:
Life with its hope and error, toil and bliss,
Earth-born, earth-reared, ye know it as it is.

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Aspiration

O deep-eyed brothers, was there ever here,
Or is there now, or shall there sometime be
Harbour or any rest for such as we,
Lone thin-cheeked mariners, that aye must steer
Our whispering barks with such keen hope and fear
Toward misty bournes across that coastless sea,
Whose winds are songs that ever gust and flee,
Whose shores are dreams that tower but come not near.
Yet we perchance, for all that flesh and mind
Of many ills be marked with many a trace,
Shall find this life more sweet more strangely kind
Than they of that dim-hearted earthly race
Who creep firm-nailed upon the earth's hard face,
And hear nor see not, being deaf and blind.

Deeds

'Tis well with words, O masters, ye have sought
To turn men's yearning to the great and true,
Yet first take heed to what your own hands do;
By deeds not words the souls of men are taught;
Good lives alone are fruitful; they are caught
Into the fountain of all life (wherethrough
Men's souls that drink are broken or made new)
Like drops of heavenly elixir, fraught
With the clear essence of eternal youth.
Even one little deed of weak untruth
Is like a drop of quenchless venom cast,
A liquid thread into life's feeding stream,
Woven for ever with its crystal gleam,
Bearing the seed of death and woe at last.

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Knowledge

What is more large than knowledge and more sweet;
Knowledge of thoughts and deeds, of rights and wrongs,
Of passions and of beauties and of songs;
Knowledge of life; to feel its great heart beat
Through all the soul upon her crystal seat;
To see, to feel, and evermore to know;
To till the old world's wisdom till it grow
A garden for the wandering of our feet.
O for a life of leisure and broad hours,
To think and dream, to put away small things,
This world's perpetual leaguer of dull naughts;
To wander like the bee among the flowers
Till old age finds us weary, feet and wings
Grown heavy with the gold of many thoughts.

Sight

The world is bright with beauty, and its days
Are filled with music; could we only know
True ends from false, and lofty things from low;
Could we but tear away the walls that graze
Our very elbows in life's frosty ways;
Behold the width beyond us with its flow,
Its knowledge and its murmur and its glow,
Where doubt itself is but a golden haze.
Ah brothers, still upon our pathway lies
The shadow of dim weariness and fear,
Yet if we could but lift our earthward eyes
To see, and open our dull ears to hear,
Then should the wonder of this world draw near
And life's innumerable harmonies.

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Salvation

Nature hath fixed in each man's life for dower
One root-like gift, one primal energy,
Wherefrom the soul takes growth, as grows a tree,
With sap and fibre, branch and leaf and flower;
But if this seed in its creative hour
Be crushed and stifled, only then the shell
Lifts like a phantom falsely visible,
Wherein is neither growth, nor joy, nor power.
Find thou this germ, and find thou thus thyself,
This one clear meaning of the deathless I,
This bent, this work, this duty—for thereby
God numbers thee, and marks thee for His own:
Careless of hurt, or threat, or praise, or pelf,
Find it and follow it, this, and this alone!

Outlook

Not to be conquered by these headlong days,
But to stand free: to keep the mind at brood
On life's deep meaning, nature's altitude
Of loveliness, and time's mysterious ways;
At every thought and deed to clear the haze
Out of our eyes, considering only this,
What man, what life, what love, what beauty is,
This is to live, and win the final praise.
Though strife, ill fortune and harsh human need
Beat down the soul, at moments blind and dumb
With agony; yet, patience—there shall come
Many great voices from life's outer sea,
Hours of strange triumph, and, when few men heed,
Murmurs and glimpses of eternity.

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Gentleness

Blind multitudes that jar confusedly
At strife, earth's children, will ye never rest
From toils made hateful here, and dawns distressed
With ravelling self-engendered misery?
And will ye never know, till sleep shall see
Your graves, how dreadful and how dark indeed
Are pride, self-will, and blind-voiced anger, greed,
And malice with its subtle cruelty?
How beautiful is gentleness, whose face
Like April sunshine, or the summer rain,
Swells everywhere the buds of generous thought;
So easy, and so sweet it is; its grace
Smoothes out so soon the tangled knots of pain.
Can ye not learn it? will ye not be taught?

Despondency

Slow figures in some live remorseless frieze,
The approaching days escapeless and unguessed,
With mask and shroud impenetrably dressed;
Time, whose inexorable destinies
Bear down upon us like impending seas;
And the huge presence of this world, at best
A sightless giant wandering without rest,
Agèd and mad with many miseries.
The weight and measure of these things who knows?
Resting at times beside life's thought-swept stream,
Sobered and stunned with unexpected blows,
We scarcely hear the uproar; life doth seem,
Save for the certain nearness of its woes,
Vain and phantasmal as a sick man's dream.

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Comfort

Comfort the sorrowful with watchful eyes
In silence, for the tongue cannot avail.
Vex not his wounds with rhetoric, nor the stale
Worn truths, that are but maddening mockeries
To him whose grief outmasters all replies.
Only watch near him gently; do but bring
The piteous help of silent ministering,
Watchful and tender. This alone is wise.
So shall thy presence and thine every motion,
The grateful knowledge of thy sad devotion,
Melt out the passionate hardness of his grief,
And break the flood-gates of the pent-up soul.
He shall bow down beneath thy mute control,
And take thine hands, and weep, and find relief.

The Railway Station

The darkness brings no quiet here, the light
No waking: ever on my blinded brain
The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and strain,
The engine's scream, the hiss and thunder smite:
I see the hurrying crowds, the clasp, the flight,
Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with pain:
I see the hoarse wheels turn, and the great train
Move labouring out into the bourneless night.
So many souls within its dim recesses,
So many bright, so many mournful eyes:
Mine eyes that watch grow fixed with dreams and guesses;
What threads of life, what hidden histories,
What sweet or passionate dreams and dark distresses,
What unknown thoughts, what various agonies!

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Ambition

I see the world in pride and tumult pass
Too bright with flame, too dark with phantasy,
Its forces meet and mingle mass in mass,
A tangle of Desire and Memory.
I see the labours of untiring hands
Closing at last upon a shadowy prize,
And Glory bear abroad through many lands
Great names—I watching with unenvious eyes:
From other lips let stormy numbers flow;
By others let great epics be compiled;
For me, the dreamer, 'tis enough to know
The lyric stress, the fervour sweet and wild:
I sit me in the windy grass and grow
As wise as age, as joyous as a child.

Death

I like to stretch full-length upon my bed,
Sometimes, when I am weary body and mind,
And think that I shall some day lie thus, blind
And cold, and motionless, my last word said.
How grim it were, how piteous to be dead!
And yet how sweet, to hear no more, nor see,
Sleeping, past care, through all eternity,
With clay for pillow to the clay-cold head.
And I should seem so absent, so serene;
They who should see me in that hour would ask
What spirit, or what fire, could ever have been
Within that yellow and discoloured mask;
For there seems life in lead, or in a stone,
But in a soul's deserted dwelling none.

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Uplifting

We passed heart-weary from the troubled house,
Where much of care and much of strife had been,
A jar of tongues upon a petty scene;
And now as from a long and tortured drouse,
The dark returned us to our purer vows:
The open darkness, like a friendly palm,
And the great night was round us with her calm:
We felt the large free wind upon our brows,
And suddenly above us saw revealed
The holy round of heaven—all its rime
Of suns and planets and its nebulous rust—
Sable and glittering like a mythic shield,
Sown with the gold of giants and of time,
The worlds and all their systems but as dust.

In Beechwood Cemetery

Here the dead sleep—the quiet dead. No sound
Disturbs them ever, and no storm dismays.
Winter mid snow caresses the tired ground,
And the wind roars about the woodland ways.
Springtime and summer and red autumn pass,
With leaf and bloom and pipe of wind and bird,
And the old earth puts forth her tender grass,
By them unfelt, unheeded and unheard.
Our centuries to them are but as strokes
In the dim gamut of some far-off chime.
Unaltering rest their perfect being cloaks—
A thing too vast to hear or feel or see—
Children of Silence and Eternity,
They know no season but the end of time.

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A Forecast

What days await this woman, whose strange feet
Breathe spells, whose presence makes men dream like wine,
Tall, free and slender as the forest pine,
Whose form is moulded music, through whose sweet
Frank eyes I feel the very heart's least beat,
Keen, passionate, full of dreams and fire:
How in the end, and to what man's desire
Shall all this yield, whose lips shall these lips meet?
One thing I know: if he be great and pure,
This love, this fire, this beauty shall endure;
Triumph and hope shall lead him by the palm:
But if not this, some differing thing he be,
That dream shall break in terror; he shall see
The whirlwind ripen, where he sowed the calm.

To An Ultra Protestant

Why rage and fret thee; only let them be:
The monkish rod, the sacerdotal pall,
Council and convent, Pope and Cardinal,
The black priest and his holy wizardry.
Nay dread them not, for thought and liberty
Spread ever faster than the foe can smite,
And these shall vanish as the starless night
Before a morning mightier than the sea.
But what of thee and thine? That battle cry,
Those forms and dogmas that thou rear'st so high,
Those blasts of doctrine and those vials of wrath,
Thy hell for most and heaven for the few,
That narrow, joyless and ungenerous path,
What then of these? Ah, they shall vanish too!

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Avarice

Beware of avarice! It is the sin
That hath no pardon either in death or here,
For it means cruelty. Hatred and fear
Enter the soul, and are the lords therein.
The gold that gathers at the rich man's knees
Is stored with curses and with dead men's bones,
And women's cries and little children's moans,
The harvest of ten thousand miseries.
What needs it to be rich—only a soul,
Deaf to the shaken tongue and blind to tears,
The sordid patience of the sightless mole!
Would'st thou thus waste the sacred span of years?
Lock up the doors of life and break the key,
The simple heart-touch with humanity?

The Vain Fight

Such a grim fight we fought for thee with death
As never hero in the ancient gloom,
With swollen brows, strained cords, and labouring breath,
Fought for Alcestis by the rocky tomb.
In vain. Thou wert too beautiful, too pure,
Too tender and too frail for earthly life.
Thou wert in love with Death, nor could'st endure
Even the dawnrise of this day of strife.
Ah! thou art gone, who scarcely saw the day,
Fair little comrade of one fleeting while,
And we must travel our appointed space,
Nor ever for the brightening of our way
Behold again on any living face
That matchless kindred look, that touching smile.

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To Death

Methought in dreams I saw my little son—
My little son that in his cradle died;
No more a babe, but all his childhood done,
A full-grown man. Deep-browed and tender-eyed,
I knew him by the subtle touch of me,
And by his mother's look, and by the eyes
We hold in such remembrance piteously,
And the bright smile so quick for sweet replies.
O Death, I would that from thy front of stone
My grief could wring one word, or my tears draw
On the strange night of life, one single gleam!
Was he whom by the gift of sleep I saw
The living shape of my belovèd gone,
My very son, or but a fleeting dream.

Night

Come with thine unveiled worlds, O truth of night,
Come with thy calm. Adown the shallow day,
Whose splendours hid the vaster world away,
I wandered on this little plot of light,
A dreamer among dreamers. Veiled or bright,
Whether the gold shower roofed me or the gray,
I strove and fretted at life's feverish play,
And dreamed until the dream seemed infinite.
But now the gateway of the All unbars;
The passions and the cares that beat so shrill,
The giants of this petty world, disband;
On the great threshold of the night I stand,
Once more a soul self-cognizant and still,
Among the wheeling multitude of stars.

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The Piano

Low brooding cadences that dream and cry
Life's stress and passion echoing straight and clear;
Wild flights of notes that clamour and beat high
Into the storm and battle, or drop sheer;
Strange majesties of sound beyond all words
Ringing on clouds and thunderous heights sublime;
Sad detonance of golden tones and chords
That tremble with the secret of all time;
O wrap me round; for one exulting hour
Possess my soul, and I indeed shall know
The wealth of living, the desire, the power,
The tragic sweep, the Apollonian glow;
All life shall stream before me; I shall see,
With eyes unblanched, Time and Eternity.

Music

Move on, light hands, so strongly tenderly,
Now with dropped calm and yearning undersong,
Now swift and loud, tumultuously strong,
And I in darkness, sitting near to thee,
Shall only hear, and feel, but shall not see,
One hour made passionately bright with dreams,
Keen glimpses of life's splendour, dashing gleams
Of what we would, and what we cannot be.
Surely not painful ever, yet not glad,
Shall such hours be to me, but blindly sweet,
Sharp with all yearning and all fact at strife,
Dreams that shine by with unremembered feet,
And tones that like far distance make this life
Spectral and wonderful and strangely sad.

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To the Lute-Player

O, take the lute this brooding hour for me—
The golden lute, the hollow crying lute—
Nor call me even with thine eyes; be mute,
And touch the strings; yea, touch them tenderly;
Touch them and dream, till all thine heart in thee
Grow great and passionate and sad and wild.
Then on me, too, as on thine heart, O child,
The marvellous light, the stress divine shall be,
And I shall see, as with enchanted eyes,
The unveiled vision of this world flame by,
Battles and griefs, and storms and phantasies,
The gleaming joy, the ever-seething fire,
The hero's triumph and the martyr's cry,
The pain, the madness, the unsearched desire.

Winter Uplands

The frost that stings like fire upon my cheek,
The loneliness of this forsaken ground,
The long white drift upon whose powdered peak
I sit in the great silence as one bound;
The rippled sheet of snow where the wind blew
Across the open fields for miles ahead;
The far-off city towered and roofed in blue
A tender line upon the western red;
The stars that singly, then in flocks appear,
Like jets of silver from the violet dome,
So wonderful, so many and so near,
And then the golden moon to light me home;
The crunching snowshoes and the stinging air,
And silence, frost and beauty everywhere.

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The Passing of the Spirit

The wind—the world-old rhapsodist—goes by,
And the great pines in changeless vesture gloomed,
And all the towering elm-trees thatched and plumed
With green, take up, one after one, the cry,
And as their choral voices swell and die,
Catching the infinite note from tree to tree,
Others far off in long antistrophe
With swaying arms and surging tops, reply.
So to men's souls, at sacred intervals,
Out of the dust of life takes wing and calls
A spirit that we know not, nor can trace,
And heart to heart makes answer with strange thrill,
It passes, and a moment face to face
We dream ourselves immortal, and are still.

The Winter Stars

Across the iron-bound silence of the night
A keen wind fitfully creeps, and far away
The northern ridges glimmer faintly bright,
Like hills on some dead planet hard and gray.
Divinely from the icy sky look down
The deathless stars that sparkle overhead,
The Wain, the Herdsman, and the Northern Crown,
And yonder, westward, large and balefully red,
Arcturus, brooding over fierce resolves:
Like mystic dancers in the Arctic air
The troops of the Aurora shift and spin:
The Dragon strews his bale-fires, and within
His trailing and prodigious loop involves
The lonely Pole Star and the Lesser Bear.

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A Winter-Dawn

Thin clouds are vanishing slowly. Overhead
The stars melt in the wakening sky; and, lo,
Far on the blue band of the eastern snow
Sober and still the morning breaks, dull red.
Innumerable smoke wreaths curl and spread
Up from the snow-capped roofs. From the gray north
A little wind that bites like fire creeps forth.
The purple mists along the south hang dead.
Out of the distance eastward, frosty, still,
Where soon the gold-shower of the sun shall be,
A file of straggling snowshoers winds aslant,
Across the dull blue river, up the hill,
Toward the dusk city plodding silently,—
The jaded enders of some midnight jaunt.

A Night of Storm

O city, whom gray stormy hands have sown
With restless drift, scarce broken now of any,
Out of the dark thy windows dim and many
Gleam red across the storm. Sound is there none,
Save evermore the fierce wind's sweep and moan,
From whose gray hands the keen white snow is shaken
In desperate gusts, that fitfully lull and waken,
Dense as night's darkness round thy towers of stone.
Darkling and strange art thou thus vexed and chidden;
More dark and strange thy veilèd agony,
City of storm, in whose gray heart are hidden
What stormier woes, what lives that groan and beat,
Stern and thin-cheeked, against time's heavier sleet,
Rude fates, hard hearts, and prisoning poverty.

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Dead Cities

I

Phantoms of many a dead idolatry,
Dream-rescued from oblivion, in mine ear
Your very names are strange and great to hear,
A sound of ancientness and majesty,
Memphis and Shushan, Carthage, Meroë,
And crowned, before these ages rose, with fame,
Troja, long vanished in Achæan flame,
On and Cyrene, perished utterly.
Things old and strange and dim to dream upon,
Cumæ and Sardis, cities waste and gone;
And that pale river by whose ghostly strand
Thebes' monstrous tombs and desolate altars stand,
Baalbec, and Tyre, and buried Babylon,
And ruined Tadmor in the desert sand.

II

Of Ur and Erech and Accad who shall tell
And Calneh in the land of Shinar. Time
Hath made them but the substance of a rhyme.
And where are Ninus and the towers that fell,
When Jahveh's anger was made visible?
Where now are Sepharvaim and its dead?
Hammath and Arpad? In their ruined stead
The wild ass and the maneless lion dwell.
In Pœstum now the roses bloom no more,
But the wind wails about the barren shore,
An echo in its gloomed and ghostly reeds.
And many a city of an elder age,
Now nameless, fallen in some antique rage,
Lies worn to dust, and none shall know its deeds.

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Winter Evening

To-night the very horses springing by
Toss gold from whitened nostrils. In a dream
The streets that narrow to the westward gleam
Like rows of golden palaces; and high
From all the crowded chimneys tower and die
A thousand aureoles. Down in the west
The brimming plains beneath the sunset rest,
One burning sea of gold. Soon, soon shall fly
The glorious vision, and the hours shall feel
A mightier master; soon from height to height,
With silence and the sharp unpitying stars,
Stern creeping frosts, and winds that touch like steel,
Out of the depth beyond the eastern bars,
Glittering and still shall come the awful night.

Winter-Break

All day between high-curded clouds the sun
Shone down like summer on the steaming planks.
The long bright icicles in dwindling ranks
Dripped from the murmuring eaves till one by one
They fell. As if the spring had now begun,
The quilted snow, sun-softened to the core,
Loosened and shunted with a sudden roar
From downward roofs. Not even with day done
Had ceased the sound of waters, but all night
I heard it. In my dreams forgetfully bright
Methought I wandered in the April woods,
Where many a silver-piping sparrow was,
By gurgling brooks and sprouting solitudes,
And stooped, and laughed, and plucked hepaticas.

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The Largest Life

I

I lie upon my bed and hear and see.
The moon is rising through the glistening trees:
And momently a great and sombre breeze,
With a vast voice returning fitfully,
Comes like a deep-toned grief, and stirs in me,
Somehow, by some inexplicable art,
A sense of my soul's strangeness, and its part
In the dark march of human destiny.
What am I, then, and what are they that pass
Yonder, and love and laugh, and mourn and weep?
What shall they know of me, or I, alas!
Of them? Little. At times, as if from sleep,
We waken to this yearning passionate mood.
And tremble at our spiritual solitude.

II

Nay, never once to feel we are alone,
While the great human heart around us lies:
To make the smile on other lips our own,
To live upon the light in others' eyes:
To breathe without a doubt the limpid air
Of that most perfect love that knows no pain:
To say—I love you—only, and not care
Whether the love come back to us again,
Divinest self-forgetfulness, at first
A task, and then a tonic, then a need;
To greet with open hands the best and worst,
And only for another's wound to bleed:
This is to see the beauty that God meant,
Wrapped round with life, ineffably content.

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III

There is a beauty at the goal of life,
A beauty growing since the world began,
Through every age and race, through lapse and strife
Till the great human soul complete her span.
Beneath the waves of storm that lash and burn,
The currents of blind passion that appall,
To listen and keep watch till we discern
The tide of sovereign truth that guides it all;
So to address our spirits to the height,
And so attune them to the valiant whole,
That the great light be clearer for our light,
And the great soul the stronger for our soul:
To have done this is to have lived, though fame
Remember us with no familiar name.

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POEMS AND BALLADS

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Among the Millet

The dew is gleaming in the grass,
  The morning hours are seven,
And I am fain to watch you pass,
  Ye soft white clouds of heaven.

Ye stray and gather, part and fold;
  The wind alone can tame you;
I think of what in time of old
  The poets loved to name you.

They called you sheep, the sky your sward,
  A field without a reaper;
They called the shining sun your lord,
  The shepherd wind your keeper.

Your sweetest poets I will deem
  The men of old for moulding
In simple beauty such a dream,
  And I could lie beholding,

Where daisies in the meadow toss,
  The wind from morn till even,
For ever shepherd you across
  The shining field of heaven.

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Freedom

Out of the heart of the city begotten
Of the labour of men and their manifold hands,
Whose souls, that were sprung from the earth in her morning,
No longer regard or remember her warning,
Whose hearts in the furnace of care have forgotten
For ever the scent and the hue of her lands;

Out of the heat of the usurer's hold,
From the horrible crash of the strong man's feet;
Out of the shadow where pity is dying;
Out of the clamour where beauty is lying,
Dead in the depth of the struggle for gold;
Out of the din and the glare of the street;

Into the arms of our mother we come,
Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,
Mother of all things beautiful, blameless,
Mother of hopes that her strength makes tameless,
Where the voices of grief and of battle are dumb,
And the whole world laughs with the light of her mirth.

Over the fields, where the cool winds sweep,
Black with the mould and brown with the loam,
Where the thin green spears of the wheat are appearing,
And the high-ho shouts from the smoky clearing;
Over the widths where the cloud shadows creep;
Over the fields and the fallows we come;

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Over the swamps with their pensive noises,
Where the burnished cup of the marigold gleams;
Skirting the reeds, where the quick winds shiver
On the swelling breast of the dimpled river,
And the blue of the kingfisher hangs and poises,
Watching a spot by the edge of the streams;

By the miles of the fences warped and dyed
With the white-hot noons and their withering fires.
Where the rough bees trample the creamy bosoms
Of the hanging tufts of the elder blossoms,
And the spiders weave, and the gray snakes hide,
In the crannied gloom of the stones and the briers;

Over the meadow lands sprouting with thistle,
Where the humming wings of the blackbirds pass,
Where the hollows are banked with the violets flowering,
And the long-limbed pendulous elms are towering,
Where the robins are loud with their voluble whistle,
And the ground-sparrow scurries away through the grass,

Where the restless bobolink loiters and woos
Down in the hollows and over the swells,
Dropping in and out of the shadows,
Sprinkling his music about the meadows,
Whistles and little checks and coos,
And the tinkle of glassy bells;

Into the dim woods full of the tombs
Of the dead trees soft in their sepulchres,
Where the pensive throats of the shy birds hidden,
Pipe to us strangely entering unbidden,
And tenderly still in the tremulous glooms
The trilliums scatter their white-winged stars;

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FREEDOM

Up to the hills where our tired hearts rest,
  Loosen, and halt, and regather their dreams;
Up to the hills, where the winds restore us,
Clearing our eyes to the beauty before us,
  Earth with the glory of life on her breast,
  Earth with the gleam of her cities and streams.

Here we shall commune with her and no other;
  Care and the battle of life shall cease;
Men, her degenerate children, behind us,
Only the might of her beauty shall bind us,
  Full of rest, as we gaze on the face of our mother,
  Earth in the health and the strength of her peace.

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Cloud-Break

With a turn of his magical rod,
That extended and suddenly shone,
From the round of his glory some god
Looks forth and is gone.

To the summit of heaven the clouds
Are rolling aloft like steam;
There's a break in their infinite shrouds,
And below it a gleam.

O'er the drift of the river a whiff
Comes out from the blossoming shore;
And the meadows are greening, as if
They never were green before.

The islands are kindled with gold
And russet and emerald dye;
And the interval waters outrolled
Are more blue than the sky.

From my feet to the heart of the hills
The spirits of May intervene,
And a vapour of azure distills
Like a breath on the opaline green.

Only a moment!—and then
The chill and the shadow decline
On the eyes of rejuvenate men
That were wide and divine.

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In May

Grief was my master yesternight;
To-morrow I may grieve again;
But now along the windy plain
The clouds have taken flight.

The sowers in the furrows go;
The lusty river brimmeth on;
The curtains from the hills are gone;
The leaves are out; and lo,

The silvery distance of the day,
The light horizons, and between
The glory of the perfect green,
The tumult of the May.

The bobolinks at noonday sing
More softly than the softest flute,
And lightlier than the lightest lute
Their fairy tambours ring.

The roads far off are towered with dust;
The cherry-blooms are swept and thinned;
In yonder swaying elms the wind
Is charging gust on gust.

But here there is no stir at all;
The ministers of sun and shadow
Hoard all the perfumes of the meadow
Behind a grassy wall.

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IN MAY

An infant rivulet wind-free
Adown the guarded hollow sets,
Over whose brink the violets
Are nodding peacefully.

From pool to pool it prattles by;
The flashing swallows dip and pass,
Above the tufted marish grass,
And here at rest am I.

I care not for the old distress,
Nor if to-morrow bid me moan;
To-day is mine, and I have known
An hour of blessedness.

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The Return of the Year

Again the warm bare earth, the noon
  That hangs upon her healing scars,
The midnight round, the great red moon,
  The mother with her brood of stars,

The mist-rack and the wakening rain
  Blown soft in many a forest way,
The yellowing elm-trees, and again
  The blood-root in its sheath of gray.

The vesper-sparrow's song, the stress
  Of yearning notes that gush and stream,
The lyric joy, the tenderness,
  And once again the dream! the dream!

A touch of far-off joy and power,
  A something it is life to learn,
Comes back to earth, and one short hour
  The glamours of the gods return.

This life's old mood and cult of care
  Falls smitten by an older truth,
And the gray world wins back to her
  The rapture of her vanished youth.

Dead thoughts revive, and he that heeds
  Shall hear, as by a spirit led,
A song among the golden reeds:
  "The gods are vanished but not dead!"

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For one short hour, unseen yet near,
They haunt us, a forgotten mood,
A glory upon mead and mere,
A magic in the leafless wood.

At morning we shall catch the glow
Of Dian's quiver on the hill,
And somewhere in the glades I know
That Pan is at his piping still.

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Why Do Ye Call the Poet Lonely

Why do ye call the poet lonely,
  Because he dreams in lonely places?
He is not desolate, but only
  Sees, where ye cannot, hidden faces.

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Midnight

From where I sit, I see the stars,
  And down the chilly floor
The moon between the frozen bars
  Is glimmering dim and hoar.

Without in many a peakèd mound
  The glinting snowdrifts lie;
There is no voice or living sound;
  The embers slowly die.

Yet some wild thing is in mine ear;
  I hold my breath and hark;
Out of the depth I seem to hear
  A crying in the dark;

No sound of man or wife or child,
  No sound of beast that groans,
Or of the wind that whistles wild,
  Or of the tree that moans:

I know not what it is I hear;
  I bend my head and hark:
I cannot drive it from mine ear,
  That crying in the dark.

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Between the Rapids

The point is turned; the twilight shadow fills
  The wheeling stream, the soft receding shore,
And on our ears from deep among the hills
  Breaks now the rapid's sudden quickening roar.
Ah, yet the same, or have they changed their face,
  The fair green fields, and can it still be seen,
The white log cottage near the mountain's base,
  So bright and quiet, so home-like and serene?
Ah, well I question, for as five years go,
How many blessings fall, and how much woe.

Aye there they are, nor have they changed their cheer,
  The fields, the hut, the leafy mountain brows;
Across the lonely dusk again I hear
  The loitering bells, the lowing of the cows,
The bleat of many sheep, the stilly rush
  Of the low whispering river, and through all,
Soft human tongues that break the deepening hush
  With faint-heard song or desultory call:
O comrades hold, the longest reach is past;
The stream runs swift, and we are flying fast.

The shore, the fields, the cottage just the same,
  But how with those whose memory makes them sweet?
Oh if I called them, hailing name by name,
  Would the same lips the same old shouts repeat?

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Have the rough years, so big with death and ill,
  Gone lightly by and left them smiling yet?
Wild black-eyed Jeanne whose tongue was never still,
  Old wrinkled Picaud, Pierre and pale Lisette,
The homely hearts that never cared to range,
While life's wide fields were filled with rush and change.

And where is Jacques, and where is Virginie?
  I cannot tell; the fields are all a blur.
The lowing cows whose shapes I scarcely see,
  Oh do they wait and do they call for her?
And is she changed, or is her heart still clear
  As wind or morning, light as river foam?
Or have life's changes borne her far from here,
  And far from rest, and far from help and home?
Ah comrades, soft, and let us rest awhile,
For arms grow tired with paddling many a mile.

The woods grow wild, and from the rising shore
  The cool wind creeps, the faint wood odours steal;
Like ghosts adown the river's blackening floor
  The misty fumes begin to creep and reel.
Once more I leave you, wandering toward the night,
  Sweet home, sweet heart, that would have held me in;
Whither I go I know not, and the light
  Is faint before, and rest is hard to win.
Ah sweet ye were and near to heaven's gate;
But youth is blind and wisdom comes too late.

Blacker and loftier grow the woods, and hark!
  The freshening roar! The chute is near us now,
And dim the canyon grows, and inky dark
  The water whispering from the birchen prow.

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One long last look, and many a sad adieu,
  While eyes can see and heart can feel you yet,
I leave sweet home and sweeter hearts to you,
  A prayer for Picaud, one for pale Lisette,
A kiss for Pierre and little Jacques for thee,
A sigh for Jeanne, a sob for Virginie.

Oh, does she still remember? Is the dream
  Now dead, or has she found another mate?
So near, so dear; and ah, so swift the stream;
  Even now perhaps it were not yet too late.
But oh, what matter; for before the night
  Has reached its middle, we have far to go:
Bend to your paddles, comrades: see, the light
  Ebbs off apace; we must not linger so.
Aye thus it is! Heaven gleams and then is gone:
Once, twice, it smiles, and still we wander on.

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Unrest

All day upon the garden bright
  The sun shines strong,
But in my heart there is no light,
  Nor any song.

Voices of merry life go by,
  Adown the street;
But I am weary of the cry
  And drift of feet.

With all dear things that ought to please
  The hours are blessed,
And yet my soul is ill at ease,
  And cannot rest.

Strange Spirit, leave me not too long,
  Nor stint to give,
For if my soul have no sweet song,
  It cannot live.

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Song

Songs that could span the earth,
  When leaping thought had stirred them,
In many an hour since birth,
  We heard or dreamed we heard them.

Sometimes to all their sway
  We yield ourselves half fearing,
Sometimes with hearts grown gray
  We curse ourselves for hearing.

We toil and but begin;
  In vain our spirits fret them,
We strive, and cannot win,
  Nor evermore forget them.

A light that will not stand,
  That comes and goes in flashes,
Fair fruits that in the hand
  Are turned to dust and ashes.

Yet still the deep thoughts ring
  Around and through and through us,
Sweet mights that make us sing,
  But bring no resting to us.

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Three Flower Petals

What saw I yesterday walking apart
In a leafy place where the cattle wait?
Something to keep for a charm in my heart—
A little sweet girl in a garden gate.
Laughing she lay in the gold sun's might,
And held for a target to shelter her,
In her little soft fingers, round and white,
The gold-rimmed face of a sunflower.

Laughing she lay on the stone that stands
For a rough-hewn step in that sunny place,
And her yellow hair hung down to her hands,
Shadowing over her dimpled face.
Her eyes like the blue of the sky, made dim
With the might of the sun that looked at her,
Shone laughing over the serried rim,
Golden set, of the sunflower.

Laughing, for token she gave to me
Three petals out of the sunflower.
When the petals are withered and gone, shall be
Three verses of mine for praise of her,
That a tender dream of her face may rise,
And lighten me yet in another hour,
Of her sunny hair and her beautiful eyes,
Laughing over the gold sunflower.

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What Do Poets Want With Gold?

What do poets want with gold,
  Cringing slaves and cushioned ease;
Are not crusts and garments old
  Better for their souls than these?

Gold is but the juggling rod
Of a false usurping god,
Graven long ago in hell
With a sombre stony spell,
Working in the world for ever.
Hate is not so strong to sever
Beating human heart from heart.
Soul from soul we shrink and part,
And no longer hail each other
With the ancient name of brother.
Give the simple poet gold,
And his song will die of cold.
He must walk with men that reel
On the rugged path, and feel
Every sacred soul that is
Beating very near to his.
Simple, human, careless, free,
As God made him, he must be:
For the sweetest song of bird
Is the hidden tenor heard
In the dusk, at even-flush,
From the forest's inner hush,
Of the simple hermit thrush.

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WHAT DO POETS WANT WITH GOLD?

What do poets want with love?
  Flowers that shiver out of hand,
And the fervid fruits that prove
  Only bitter broken sand?

Poets speak of passion best,
When their dreams are undistressed,
And the sweetest songs are sung,
E'er the inner heart is stung.
Let them dream; 'tis better so;
Ever dream, but never know.
If their spirits once have drained
All that goblet crimson-stained,
Finding what they dreamed divine,
Only earthly sluggish wine,
Sooner will the warm lips pale,
And the flawless voices fail,
Sooner come the drooping wing,
And the afterdays that bring
No such songs as did the spring.

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The Child's Music Lesson

Why weep ye in your innocent toil at all?
  Sweet little hands, why halt and tremble so?
Full many a wrong note falls, but let it fall!
  Each note to me is like a golden glow;
Each broken cadence like a morning call;
  Nay, clear and smooth I would not have you go,
Soft little hands upon the curtained threshold set
Of this long life of labour, and unrestful fret.

Soft sunlight flickers on the checkered green:
  Warm winds are stirring round my dreaming seat:
Among the yellow pumpkin blooms, that lean
  Their crumpled rims beneath the heavy heat,
The stripèd bees in lazy labour glean
  From bell to bell with golden-feathered feet;
Yet even here the voices of hard life go by;
Outside, the city strains with its eternal cry.

Here, as I sit—the sunlight on my face,
  And shadows of green leaves upon mine eyes—
My heart, a garden in a hidden place,
  Is full of folded buds of memories.
Stray hither then with all your old time grace,
  Child-voices, trembling from the uncertain keys;
Play on, ye little fingers, touch the settled gloom,
And quickly, one by one, my waiting buds will bloom.

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THE CHILD'S MUSIC LESSON

Ah me, I may not set my feet again
  In any part of that old garden dear,
Or pluck one widening blossom, for my pain;
  But only at the wicket gaze I here:
Old scents creep into mine inactive brain,
  Smooth scents of things I may not come anear;
I see, far off, old beaten pathways they adorn;
I cannot feel with hands the blossom or the thorn.

Toil on sweet hands; once more I see the child;
  The little child, that was myself, appears,
And all the old time beauties, undefiled,
  Shine back to me across the opening years,
Quick griefs, that made the tender bosom wild,
  Short blinding gusts, that died in passionate tears,
Sweet life, with all its change, that now so happy seems,
With all its child-heart glories, and untutored dreams.

Play on into the golden sunshine so,
  Sweeter than all great artist's labouring:
  I too was like you once, an age ago:
  God keep you, dimpled fingers, for you bring
Quiet gliding ghosts to me of joy and woe,
  No certain things at all that thrill or sting,
But only sounds and scents and savours of things bright,
No joy or aching pain; but only dim delight.

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Favourites of Pan

Once, long ago, before the gods
  Had left this earth, by stream and forest glade,
Where the first plough upturned the clinging sods,
  Or the lost shepherd strayed,

Often to the tired listener's ear
  There came at noonday or beneath the stars
A sound, he knew not whence, so sweet and clear,
  That all his aches and scars

And every brooded bitterness,
  Fallen asunder from his soul, took flight,
Like mist or darkness yielding to the press
  Of an unnamed delight,—

A sudden brightness of the heart,
  A magic fire drawn down from Paradise,
That rent the cloud with golden gleam apart,—
  And far before his eyes

The loveliness and calm of earth
  Lay like a limitless dream remote and strange,
The joy, the strife, the triumph and the mirth,
  And the enchanted change;

And so he followed the sweet sound,
  Till faith had traversed her appointed span,
And murmured as he pressed the sacred ground:
  "It is the note of Pan!"

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Now though no more by marsh or stream
  Or dewy forest sounds the secret reed—
For Pan is gone—ah yet, the infinite dream
  Still lives for them that heed.

In April, when the turning year
  Regains its pensive youth, and a soft breath
And amorous influence over marsh and mere
  Dissolves the grasp of death,

To them that are in love with life,
  Wandering like children with untroubled eyes,
Far from the noise of cities and the strife,
  Strange flute-like voices rise

At noon and in the quiet of the night
  From every watery waste; and in that hour
The same strange spell, the same unnamed delight,
  Enfolds them in its power.

An old-world joyousness supreme,
  The warmth and glow of an immortal balm,
The mood-touch of the gods, the endless dream,
  The high lethean calm.

They see, wide on the eternal way,
  The services of earth, the life of man;
And, listening to the magic cry they say:
  "It is the note of Pan!"

For, long ago, when the new strains
  Of hostile hymns and conquering faiths grew keen,
And the old gods from their deserted fanes,
  Fled silent and unseen,

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So, too, the goat-foot Pan, not less
  Sadly obedient to the mightier hand,
Cut him new reeds, and in a sore distress
  Passed out from land to land;

And lingering by each haunt he knew,
  Of fount or sinuous stream or grassy marge,
He set the syrinx to his lips, and blew
  A note divinely large;

And all around him on the wet
  Cool earth the frogs came up, and with a smile
He took them in his hairy hands, and set
  His mouth to theirs awhile,

And blew into their velvet throats;
  And ever from that hour the frogs repeat
The murmur of Pan's pipes, the notes,
  And answers strange and sweet;

And they that hear them are renewed
  By knowledge in some god-like touch conveyed,
Entering again into the eternal mood
  Wherein the world was made.

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Life and Nature

I passed through the gates of the city,
The streets were strange and still,
Through the doors of the open churches
The organs were moaning shrill.

Through the doors and the great high windows
I heard the murmur of prayer,
And the sound of their solemn singing
Streamed out on the sunlit air;

A sound of some great burden
That lay on the world's dark breast,
Of the old, and the sick, and the lonely,
And the weary that cried for rest.

I strayed through the midst of the city
Like one distracted or mad.
"O Life! O Life!" I kept saying,
And the very word seemed sad.

I passed through the gates of the city,
And I heard the small birds sing,
I laid me down in the meadows
Afar from the bell-ringing.

In the depth and the bloom of the meadows
I lay on the earth's quiet breast,
The poplar fanned me with shadows,
And the veery sang me to rest.

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Blue, blue was the heaven above me,
And the earth green at my feet;
"O Life! O Life!" I kept saying,
And the very word seemed sweet.

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With the Night

O doubts, dull passions, and base fears,
  That harassed and oppressed the day,
Ye poor remorses and vain tears,
  That shook this house of clay;

All heaven to the western bars
  Is glittering with the darker dawn;
Here, with the earth, the night, the stars,
  Ye have no place: begone!

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Sostratus

Sostratus, son of Laodamas, Prince of Ægina,
Named in the book of Herodotus still shall you find him,
He who was first of the Hellenes in trade, and outsailing
All to the westward, returned with the goodliest cargo,
Now in the dusk of the twilight meseemeth I see him,
Straight on the deck of his ship within sight of Ægina,
Borne by the evening wind, with the hold of his vessel
Heavy with amber and pitch and hides from the Spanish
Forests, and copper hewed out from the hills of Tartessus.
Westward the shores of Kalauria gloom, but the golden
Crests of the islands are luminous still with the sunset;
Taut are the sails, and the cordage groans, and the plunging
Oars keep time with the tremulous chant of the sailors.
Full of the triumph of life is his strenuous figure;
Bronzed are his cheeks, and toughened his hands, and his shining
Eyes are alive with memories, full of the stories
Gathered from wonderful folk on the strands of the ocean,
Soon to be rolled from his lips on the listening market
There in Ægina. Full is his heart too of visions,
Plans for far-venturing trade in the opulent future.
Gone are his figure and face now; gone are his people,
Sostratus, son of Laodamas, Prince of Ægina;
Yet like a gleam out of primitive shadow revealing
Worlds of old joy and wonder of living and effort
Named in the book of Herodotus still shall you find him.

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King Oswald's Feast

The king had laboured all an autumn day
For his folk's good and welfare of the kirk,
And now when eventide was well away,
And deepest mirk

Lay heavy on York town, he sat at meat,
With his great councillors round him and his kin,
And a blithe face was sat in every seat,
And far within

The hall was jubilant with banqueting,
The tankards foaming high as they could hold
With mead, the plates well-heaped, and everything
Was served with gold.

Then came to the king's side the doorkeeper,
And said: "The folk are thronging at the gate,
And flaunt their rags and many plaints prefer,
And through the grate

"I see that many are ill-clad and lean,
For fields are poor this year, and food hard-won."
And the good king made answer, " 'Twere ill seen
And foully done,

"Were I to feast, while many starve without;"
And he bade bear the most and best of all
To give the folk; and lo, they raised a shout
That shook the hall.

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And now lean fare for those at board was set,
But came again the doorkeeper and cried:
The folk still hail thee, sir, nor will they yet
Be satisfied;

"They say they have no surety for their lives,
When winters bring hard nights and heatless suns,
Nor bread, nor raiment have they for their wives
And little ones."

Then said the king: "It is not well that I
Should eat from gold, when many are so poor,
For he that guards his greatness guards a lie;
Of that be sure."

And so he bade collect the golden plate,
And all the tankards, and break up, and bear,
And give them to the folk that thronged the gate,
To each his share.

And the great councillors in cold surprise
Looked on and murmured; but unmindfully
The king sat dreaming with far-fixèd eyes,
And it may be

He saw some vision of that Holy One
Who knew no rest or shelter for His head,
When self was scorned and brotherhood begun.
" 'Tis just," he said:

"Henceforward wood shall serve me for my plate,
And earthen cups suffice me for my mead;
With them that joy or travail at my gate
I laugh or bleed."

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The Passing of Autumn

The wizard has woven his ancient scheme;
A day and a starlit night;
And the world is a shadowy-pencilled dream
Of colour, haze, and light.

Like something an angel wrought, maybe,
To answer a fairy's whim,
A fold of an ancient tapestry,
A phantom rare and dim.

Silent and smooth as the crystal stone
The river lies serene,
And the fading hills are a jewelled throne
For the Fall and the Mist, his Queen.

Slim as out of aerial seas,
The elms and poplars fair
Float like the dainty spirits of trees
In the mellow dreamlike air.

Silvery-soft by the forest side—
Wine-red, yellow, rose—
The wizard of Autumn, faint, blue-eyed—
Swinging his censer, goes.

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An Ode to the Hills

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help."—*Psalm cxxi.*

Æons ago ye were,
Before the struggling changeful race of men
Wrought into being, ere the tragic stir
Of human toil and deep desire began:
So shall ye still remain,
Lords of an elder and immutable race,
When many a broad metropolis of the plain,
Or thronging port by some renownèd shore,
Is sunk in nameless ruin, and its place
Recalled no more.

Empires have come and gone,
And glorious cities fallen in their prime;
Divine, far-echoing, names once writ in stone
Have vanished in the dust and void of time;
But ye, firm-set, secure,
Like Treasure in the hardness of God's palm,
Are yet the same for ever; ye endure
By virtue of an old slow-ripening word,
In your gray majesty and sovereign calm,
Untouched, unstirred.

Tempest and thunderstroke,
With whirlwinds dipped in midnight at the core,
Have torn strange furrows through your forest cloak,
And made your hollow gorges clash and roar,

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And scarred your brows in vain.
Around your barren heads and granite steeps
Tempestuous gray battalions of the rain
Charge and recharge across the plateaued floors,
Drenching the serried pines; and the hail sweeps
Your pitiless scaurs.

The long midsummer heat
Chars the thin leafage of your rocks in fire:
Autumn with windy robe and ruinous feet
On your wide forests wreaks his fell desire,
Heaping in barbarous wreck
The treasure of your sweet and prosperous days;
And lastly the grim tyrant, at whose beck
Channels are turned to stone and tempests wheel,
On brow and breast and shining shoulder lays
His hand of steel.

And yet not harsh alone,
Nor wild, nor bitter, are your destinies,
O fair and sweet, for all your heart of stone,
Who gather beauty round your Titan knees,
As the lens gathers light.
The dawn gleams rosy on your splendid brows,
The sun at noonday folds you in his might,
And swathes your forehead at his going down,
Last leaving, where he first in pride bestows,
His golden crown.

In unregarded glooms,
Where hardly shall a human footstep pass,
Myriads of ferns and soft maianthemums,
Or lily-breathing slender pyrolas

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Distil their hearts for you.
Far in your pine-clad fastnesses ye keep
Coverts the lonely thrush shall wander through,
With echoes that seem ever to recede,
Touching from pine to pine, from steep to steep,
His ghostly reed.

The fierce things of the wild
Find food and shelter in your tenantless rocks.
The eagle on whose wings the dawn hath smiled,
The loon, the wild-cat, and the bright-eyed fox;
For far away indeed
Are all the ominous noises of mankind,
The slaughterer's malice and the trader's greed:
Your rugged haunts endure no slavery:
No treacherous hand is there to crush or bind,
But all are free.

Therefore out of the stir
Of cities and the ever-thickening press
The poet and the worn philosopher
To your bare peaks and radiant loneliness
Escape, and breathe once more
The wind of the Eternal: that clear mood,
Which Nature and the elder ages bore,
Lends them new courage and a second prime,
At rest upon the cool infinitude
Of Space and Time.

The mists of troublous days,
The horror of fierce hands and fraudful lips,
The blindness gathered in Life's aimless ways
Fade from them, and the kind Earth-spirit strips

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The bandage from their eyes,
Touches their hearts and bids them feel and see;
Beauty and Knowledge with that rare apprise
Pour over them from some divine abode,
Falling as in a flood of memory,
The bliss of God.

I too perchance some day,
When Love and Life have fallen far apart,
Shall slip the yoke and seek your upward way
And make my dwelling in your changeless heart;
And there in some quiet glade,
Some virgin plot of turf, some innermost dell,
Pure with cool water and inviolate shade,
I'll build a blameless altar to the dear
And kindly gods who guard your haunts so well
From hurt or fear.

There I will dream day-long,
And honour them in many sacred ways,
With hushèd melody and uttered song,
And golden meditation and with praise.
I'll touch them with a prayer,
To clothe my spirit as your might is clad
With all things bountiful, divine, and fair,
Yet inwardly to make me hard and true,
Wide-seeing, passionless, immutably glad,
And strong like you.

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The Vase of Ibn Mokbil

In the house of Ibn Mokbil
  Stands a vase;
    Masters if you ask us
What within its heart is dreaming,
Heart of gold and crystal gleaming,
    We shall answer:
All the riches of Damascus,
  Cairo or Shiraz.

No man—even Ibn Mokbil—
  Ever guessed
    Whence it came—who brought it:
But it stood there one fair morning,
All the simple place adorning
    With its beauty—
People said the Jinn had wrought it—
  Faith is best.

In the house of Ibn Mokbil,
  Till it came,
    There was nothing. Only
His few books and herbs for healing
And his prayer-mat worn with kneeling,
    And the old man,
With his sleepless eyes and lonely
  Heart of flame.

Full of woe was Ibn Mokbil
  To behold
    Brothers overtaken

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By misfortune—sitting restless
In his house forlorn and guestless,
With a larder
Empty, and a purse forsaken
Of its gold.

For the spirit of the Faquir
Loved the light,
And the burden weighing
Deeper still with every morrow
Of the people's want and sorrow
Bent and aged him,
And his knees were sore with praying,
Day and night.

Then somehow to Ibn Mokbil
Came the vase,
And the tale would task us,
Half to tell what meat and treasure,
Things of help and things of pleasure,
Overbrimmed it—
All the riches of Damascus,
Cairo or Shiraz.

Now the doors of Ibn Mokbil
Open wide—
Moan is heard no longer—
Now the gifts are overflowing;
Coming round the vase and going,
Crowd the people:
None that ail, and none that hunger
Are denied.

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For the vase, a magic fountain,
By unseen
Hands at midnight charging—
Jinn, they say—its store reneweth
Ready for the lip that sueth,
First at morning,
Heaped about the flashing margin,
Gold and green.

Yet one law for Ibn Mokbil,
If he break,
Spoils and ends the treasure:
Round the vase it runs in letters,
Woven like a wreath of fetters,
Not one tittle
Must the Faquir for his pleasure
Touch or take.

Never murmurs Ibn Mokbil,
Nor complains.
Though the fierce and greedy
Enter at his gate for plunder
Scattered by no bolt of thunder,
Yet untroubled,
He a Faquir, poor and needy,
Still remains.

In the house of Ibn Mokbil
Nothing stays,
Of the gifts returning:
All is empty; it is lonely;
Save the books and prayer-mat only,
And the Faquir

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With his gleaming eyes and burning
Heart of praise.

For the vase beyond the crystal
To his eyes—
Now when day is sinking—
Opens like a rift of heaven,
And the things of Allah given—
Dreams and visions—
Pour upon his spirit drinking
Paradise.

To the ears of Ibn Mokbil
Angels tell
Tales of how the bringer
Of the faith of old still careth
For the foot that strictly fareth.
As he listens,
Falls a voice divine, the singer,
Israfel.

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A Spanish Taunt

"Now who will carry the gate with me?"
Fernando del Pulgar cried:
"Carry and hold it safe, while I
To the church of Mahomet ride?"

Fifteen stalwarts of old Castile
At the side of the hero strode.
They carried the gate, and in at the gap
Fernando del Pulgar rode.

He clove and shattered a helm or twain,
And gathered his reins and sprang,
And far and away in the silent night
The hoofs of his courser rang.

Fernando del Pulgar, sword and shield,
Helmet and hauberk too—
Through the startled streets of Mahomet's town
The sparks from the pavement flew.

On like the hurricane wind he rode,
With thunder of saddle and steel:
At the front of the proudest mosque drew up
With a crashing sweep and wheel:

And, "Ave Maria," high aloft
To the moonlit door, writ plain,
He pinned with his poniard point, and spurred,
And rode for the gate again.

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A SPANISH TAUNT

Back with the thunder of saddle and steel,
The heart of the hero sprang:
Loud and sharp in the silent night
The hoofs of his courser rang.

Fernando del Pulgar, sword and shield,
Helmet and hauberk too;
Back, like the hurricane wind he rode,
And the sparks from the pavement flew.

With a singing sweep and dint of his sword,
The blood of the Paynim flowed,
Hurled this way and that, and out of the gate
Fernando del Pulgar rode.

"I have ridden," he shouted, "Mahomet's town,
As free as light or wind,
And high to the door of Mahomet's mosque
The name of the Virgin pinned."

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Distance

To the distance! ah, the distance!
  Blue and broad and dim!
Peace is not in burgh or meadow
  But beyond the rim.

Aye, beyond it, far beyond it;
  Follow still my soul,
Till this earth is lost in heaven,
  And thou feel'st the whole.

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The Moon-Path

The full, clear moon uprose and spread
  Her cold, pale splendour o'er the sea;
A light-strewn path that seemed to lead
  Outward into eternity.
Between the darkness and the gleam
  An old-world spell encompassed me:
Methought that in a godlike dream
  I trod upon the sea.

And lo! upon that glimmering road,
  In shining companies unfurled,
The trains of many a primal god,
  The monsters of the elder world;
Strange creatures that, with silver wings,
  Scarce touched the ocean's thronging floor,
The phantoms of old tales, and things
  Whose shapes are known no more.

Giants and demi-gods who once
  Were dwellers of the earth and sea,
And they who from Deucalion's stones,
  Rose men without an infancy;
Beings on whose majestic lids
  Time's solemn secrets seemed to dwell,
Tritons and pale-limbed Nereids,
  And forms of heaven and hell.

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Some who were heroes long of yore,
  When the great world was hale and young;
And some whose marble lips yet pour
  The murmur of an antique tongue;
Sad queens, whose names are like soft moans,
  Whose griefs were written up in gold;
And some who on their silver thrones
  Were goddesses of old.

As if I had been dead indeed,
  And come into some after-land,
I saw them pass me, and take heed,
  And touch me with each mighty hand;
And evermore a murmurous stream,
  So beautiful they seemed to me,
Not less than in a godlike dream
  I trod the shining sea.

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A Re-Assurance

With what doubting eyes, O sparrow,
  Thou regardest me,
Underneath yon spray of yarrow,
  Dipping cautiously.

Fear me not, O little sparrow,
  Bathe and never fear,
For to me both pool and yarrow
  And thyself are dear.

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The Poet's Possession

Think not, O master of the well-tilled field,
This earth is only thine; for after thee,
When all is sown and gathered and put by,
Comes the grave poet with creative eye,
And from these silent acres and clean plots,
Bids with his wand the fancied after-yield
A second tilth and second harvest be,
The crop of images and curious thoughts.

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Alcyone

In the silent depth of space,
Immeasurably old, immeasurably far,
Glittering with a silver flame
Through eternity,
Rolls a great and burning star,
With a noble name,
Alcyone!

In the glorious chart of heaven
It is marked the first of seven;
'Tis a Pleiad:
And a hundred years of earth
With their long-forgotten deeds have come
and gone,
Since that tiny point of light,
Once a splendour fierce and bright,
Had its birth
In the star we gaze upon.
It has travelled all that time—
Thought has not a swifter flight—
Through a region where no faintest gust
Of life comes ever, but the power of night
Dwells stupendous and sublime,
Limitless and void and lonely,
A region mute with age, and peopled only
With the dead and ruined dust
Of worlds that lived eternities ago.

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Man! when thou dost think of this,
And what our earth and its existence is,
The half-blind toils since life began,
The little aims, the little span,
With what passion and what pride,
And what hunger fierce and wide,
Thou dost break beyond it all,
Seeking for the spirit unconfined
In the clear abyss of mind
A shelter and a peace majestical.
For what is life to thee,
Turning toward the primal light,
With that stern and silent face,
If thou canst not be
Something radiant and august as night,
Something wide as space?
Therefore with a love and gratitude divine
Thou shalt cherish in thine heart for sign
A vision of the great and burning star,
Immeasurably old, immeasurably far,
Surging forth its silver flame
Through eternity;
And thine inner heart shall ring and cry
With the music strange and high,
The grandeur of its name
Alcyone!

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Impromptu

Sweeter than any name
Of power or blessing, of tumult or of calm,
The pride of any victory with its palm,
Sweeter than fame,
The love we bear to women in our youth,
When ardour cleaves to ardour, truth to truth;

When Beauty casts her sheaf
And flings its loaded treasure at our feet:
But bitter—bitter,—even as this is sweet,
The gathering grief
Of passionate love misplaced, or given in vain,
The love that bears no harvest save of pain.

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Refuge

Where swallows and wheatfields are,
  O hamlet brown and still,
O river that shineth far,
  By meadow, pier, and mill:

O endless sunsteeped plain,
  With forests in dim blue shrouds,
And little wisps of rain,
  Falling from far-off clouds:

I come from the choking air
  Of passion, doubt, and strife,
With a spirit and mind laid bare
  To your healing breadth of life:

O fruitful and sacred ground,
  O sunlight and summer sky,
Absorb me and fold me round,
  For broken and tired am I.

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To My Daughter

O little one, daughter, my dearest,
With your smiles and your beautiful curls,
And your laughter, the brightest and clearest,
O gravest and gayest of girls;

With your hands that are softer than roses,
And your lips that are lighter than flowers,
And that innocent brow that discloses
A wisdom more lovely than ours;

With your locks that encumber, or scatter
In a thousand mercurial gleams,
And those feet whose impetuous patter
I hear and remember in dreams;

With your manner of motherly duty,
When you play with your dolls and are wise;
With your wonders of speech, and the beauty
In your little imperious eyes;

When I hear you so silverly ringing
Your welcome from chamber or stair,
When you run to me kissing and clinging,
So radiant, so rosily fair;

I bend like an ogre above you;
I bury my face in your curls;
I fold you, I clasp you, I love you,
O baby, queen-blossom of girls!

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Chione

Scarcely a breath about the rocky stair
Moved, but the growing tide from verge to verge,
Heaving salt fragrance on the midnight air,
Climbed with a murmurous and fitful surge.
A hoary mist rose up and slowly sheathed
The dripping walls and portal granite-stepped,
And sank into the inner court, and crept
From column unto column thickly wreathed.

In that dead hour of darkness before dawn,
When hearts beat fainter and the hands of death
Are strengthened, with lips white and drawn
And feverish lids and scarcely moving breath
The hapless mother, tender Chione,
Beside the earth-cold figure of her child,
After long bursts of weeping sharp and wild
Lay broken, silent in her agony.

At first in waking horror racked and bound
She lay, and then a gradual stupor grew
About her soul and wrapped her round and round
Like death, and then she sprang to life anew
Out of a darkness clammy as the tomb;
And, touched by memory or some spirit hand,
She seemed to keep a pathway down a land
Of monstrous shadow and Cimmerian gloom.

A waste of cloudy and perpetual night—
And yet there seemed a teeming presence there
Of life that gathered onward in thick flight,
Unseen, but multitudinous. Aware

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Of something also on her path she was
That drew her heart forth with a tender cry.
She hurried with drooped ear and eager eye,
And called on the foul shapes to let her pass.

For down the sloping darkness far ahead
She saw a little figure slight and small,
With yearning arms and shadowy curls outspread,
Running at frightened speed; and it would fall
And rise, sobbing; and through the ghostly sleet
The cry came: 'Mother! Mother!' and she wist
The tender eyes were blinded by the mist,
And the rough stones were bruising the small feet.

And when she lifted a keen cry and clave
Forthright the gathering horror of the place,
Mad with her love and pity, a dark wave
Of clapping shadows swept about her face,
And beat her back, and when she gained her breath,
Athwart an awful vale a grizzled steam
Was rising from a mute and murky stream,
As cold and cavernous as the eye of death.

And near the ripple stood the little shade,
And many hovering ghosts drew near him, some
That seemed to peer out of the mist and fade
With eyes of soft and shadowing pity, dumb;
But others closed him round with eager sighs
And sweet insistence, striving to caress
And comfort him; but grieving none the less,
He reached her heartstrings with his tender cries.

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And silently across the horrid flow,
The shapeless bark and pallid chalklike arms
Of him that oared it, dumbly to and fro,
Went gliding, and the struggling ghosts in swarms
Leaped in and passed, but myriads more behind
Crowded the dismal beaches. One might hear
A tumult of entreaty thin and clear
Rise like the whistle of a winter wind.

And still the little figure stood beside
The hideous stream, and toward the whispering prow
Held forth his tender tremulous hands, and cried,
Now to the awful ferryman, and now
To her that battled with the shades in vain.
Sometimes impending over all her sight
The spongy dark and the phantasmal flight
Of things half-shapen passed and hid the plain.

And sometimes in a gust a sort of wind
Drove by, and where its power was hurled,
She saw across the twilight, jarred and thinned,
Those gloomy meadows of the under world,
Where never sunlight was, nor grass, nor trees,
And the dim pathways from the Stygian shore,
Sombre and swart and barren, wandered o'er
By countless melancholy companies.

And farther still upon the utmost rim
Of the drear waste, whereto the roadways led,
She saw in piling outline, huge and dim,
The walled and towerèd dwellings of the dead

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And the grim house of Hades. Then she broke
Once more fierce-footed through the noisome press;
But ere she reached the goal of her distress,
Her pierced heart seemed to shatter, and she woke.

It seemed as she had been entombed for years,
And came again to living with a start.
There was an awful echoing in her ears
And a great deadness pressing at her heart.
She shuddered and with terror seemed to freeze,
Lip-shrunken and wide-eyed a moment's space,
And then she touched the little lifeless face,
And kissed it and rose up upon her knees.

And round her still the silence seemed to teem
With the foul shadows of her dream beguiled—
No dream, she thought; it could not be a dream,
But her child called for her; her child, her child!—
She clasped her quivering fingers white and spare,
And knelt low down, and bending her fair head
Unto the lower gods who rule the dead,
Touched them with tender homage and this prayer:

O gloomy masters of the dark demesne,
Hades, and thou whom the dread deity
Bore once from earthly Enna for his queen,
Beloved of Demeter, pale Persephone,
Grant me one boon;
'Tis not for life I pray,
Not life, but quiet death; and that soon, soon!
Loose from my soul this heavy weight of clay,
This net of useless woe.
O mournful mother, sad Persephone,
Be mindful, let me go!

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How shall he journey to the dismal beach,
Or win the ear of Charon, without one
To keep him and stand by him, sure of speech?
He is so little, and has just begun
To use his feet
And speak a few small words,
And all his daily usage has been sweet
As the soft nesting ways of tender birds.
How shall he fare at all
Across that grim inhospitable land,
If I too be not by to hold his hand,
And help him if he fall?

And then before the gloomy judges set,
How shall he answer? Oh, I cannot bear
To see his tender cheeks with weeping wet,
Or hear the sobbing cry of his despair!
I could not rest,
Nor live with patient mind,
Though knowing what is fated must be best;
But surely thou art more than mortal kind,
And thou canst feel my woe,
All-pitying, all-observant, all-divine;
He is so little, mother Proserpine,
He needs me, let me go!

Thus far she prayed, and then she lost her way,
And left the half of all her heart unsaid,
And a great languor seized her, and she lay,
Soft fallen, by the little silent head.
Her numbèd lips had passed beyond control,
Her mind could neither plan nor reason more,
She saw dark waters and an unknown shore,
And the gray shadows crept about her soul.

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Again through darkness on an evil land
She seemed to enter but without distress.
A little spirit led her by the hand
And her wide heart was warm with tenderness.
Her lips, still moving, conscious of one care,
Murmured a moment in soft mother tones,
And so fell silent. From their sombre thrones
Already the grim gods had heard her prayer.

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The Song of Pan

Mad with love and laden
With immortal pain,
Pan pursued a maiden—
Pan, the god—in vain.

For when Pan had nearly
Touched her, wild to plead,
She was gone—and clearly
In her place a reed!

Long the god, unwitting,
Through the valley strayed;
Then at last submitting,
Cut the reed, and made,

Deftly fashioned, seven
Pipes, and poured his pain
Unto earth and heaven
In a piercing strain.

So with god and poet;
Beauty lures them on,
Flies, and ere they know it
Like a wraith is gone.

Then they seek to borrow
Pleasure still from wrong,
And with smiling sorrow
Turn it to a song.

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The Clearer Self

Before me grew the human soul,
  And after I am dead and gone,
Through grades of effort and control
  The marvellous work shall still go on.

Each mortal in his little span
  Hath only lived, if he have shown
What greatness there can be in man
  Above the measured and the known;

How through the ancient layers of night,
  In gradual victory secure,
Grows ever with increasing light
  The Energy serene and pure:

The Soul that from a monstrous past,
  From age to age, from hour to hour,
Feels upward to some height at last
  Of unimagined grace and power.

Though yet the sacred fire be dull,
  In folds of thwarting matter furled,
Ere death be nigh, while life is full,
  O Master Spirit of the world,

Grant me to know, to seek, to find,
  In some small measure though it be,
Emerging from the waste and blind,
  The clearer self, the grander me!

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To the Prophetic Soul

What are these bustlers at the gate
  Of now or yesterday,
These playthings in the hand of Fate,
  That pass, and point no way;

These clinging bubbles whose mock fires
  For ever dance and gleam,
Vain foam that gathers and expires
  Upon the world's dark stream;

These gropers betwixt right and wrong,
  That seek an unknown goal,
Most ignorant when they seem most strong;
  What are they, then, O Soul,

That thou shouldst covet overmuch
  A tenderer range of heart,
And yet at every dreamed-of touch
  So tremulously start?

Thou with that hatred ever new
  Of the world's base control,
That vision of the large and true,
  That quickness of the soul;

Nay, for they are not of thy kind,
  But in a rarer clay
God dowered thee with an alien mind;
  Thou canst not be as they.

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TO THE PROPHETIC SOUL

Be strong, therefore; resume thy load,
  And forward stone by stone
Go singing, though the glorious road
  Thou travellest alone.

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The City

Canst thou not rest, O city,
That liest so wide and fair;
Shall never an hour bring pity,
Nor end be found for care?

Thy walls are high in heaven,
Thy streets are gay and wide,
Beneath thy towers at even
The dreamy waters glide.

Thou art fair as the hills at morning,
And the sunshine loveth thee,
But its light is a gloom of warning
On a soul no longer free.

The curses of gold are about thee,
And thy sorrow deepeneth still;
One madness within and without thee,
One battle blind and shrill.

I see the crowds for ever
Go by with hurrying feet;
Through doors that darken never
I hear the engines beat.

Through days and nights that follow
The hidden mill-wheel strains;
In the midnight's windy hollow
I hear the roar of trains.

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And still the day fulfilleth,
  And still the night goes round,
And the guest-hall boometh and shrilleth,
  With the dance's mocking sound.

In chambers of gold elysian,
  The cymbals clash and clang,
But the days are gone like a vision
  When the people wrought and sang.

And toil hath fear for neighbour,
  Where singing lips are dumb,
And life is one long labour,
  Till death or freedom come.

Ah! the crowds that for ever are flowing—
  They neither laugh nor weep—
I see them coming and going,
  Like things that move in sleep:

Gray sires and burdened brothers,
  The old, the young, the fair,
Wan cheeks of pallid mothers,
  And the girls with golden hair.

Care sits in many a fashion,
  Grown gray on many a head,
And lips are turned to ashen
  Whose years have right to red.

Canst thou not rest, O city,
  That liest so wide, so fair;
Shall never an hour bring pity,
  Nor end be found for care?

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Sapphics

Clothed in splendour, beautifully sad and silent,
Comes the autumn over the woods and highlands,
Golden, rose-red, full of divine remembrance,
Full of foreboding.

Soon the maples, soon will the glowing birches,
Stripped of all that summer and love had dowered them,
Dream, sad-limbed, beholding their pomp and treasure
Ruthlessly scattered:

Yet they quail not: Winter with wind and iron
Comes and finds them silent and uncomplaining,
Finds them tameless, beautiful still and gracious,
Gravely enduring.

Me too changes, bitter and full of evil,
Dream by dream have plundered and left me naked,
Gray with sorrow. Even the days before me
Fade into twilight,

Mute and barren. Yet will I keep my spirit
Clear and valiant, brother to these my noble
Elms and maples, utterly grave and fearless,
Grandly ungrieving.

Brief the span is, counting the years of mortals,
Strange and sad; it passes, and then the bright earth,
Careless mother, gleaming with gold and azure,
Lovely with blossoms—

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SAPPHICS

Shining white anemones, mixed with roses,
Daisies mild-eyed, grasses and honeyed clover—
You and me, and all of us, met and equal,
Softly shall cover.

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A Vision of Twilight

By a void and soundless river
  On the outer edge of space,
Where the body comes not ever,
  But the absent dream hath place,
Stands a city tall and quiet,
  And its air is sweet and dim;
Never sound of grief or riot
  Makes it mad, or makes it grim.

And the tender skies thereover
  Neither sun, nor star, behold—
Only dusk it hath for cover,—
  But a glamour soft with gold,
Through a mist of dreamier essence
  Than the dew of twilight, smiles
On strange shafts and domes and crescents,
  Lifting into eerie piles.

In its courts and hallowed places
  Dreams of distant worlds arise,
Shadows of transfigured faces,
  Glimpses of immortal eyes,
Echoes of serenest pleasure,
  Notes of perfect speech that fall,
Through an air of endless leisure,
  Marvellously musical.

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And I wander there at even,
  Sometimes when my heart is clear,
When a wider round of heaven
  And a vaster world are near,
When from many a shadow steeple
  Sounds of dreamy bells begin,
And I love the gentle people
  That my spirit finds therein.

Men of a diviner making
  Than the sons of pride and strife,
Quick with love and pity, breaking
  From a knowledge old as life;
Women of a spiritual rareness,
  Whom old passion and old woe
Moulded to a slenderer fairness
  Than the dearest shapes we know.

In its domed and towerèd centre
  Lies a garden wide and fair,
Open for the soul to enter,
  And the watchful townsmen there
Greet the stranger gloomed and fretting
  From this world of stormy hands,
With a look that deals forgetting
  And a touch that understands.

For they see with power, not borrowed
  From a record taught or told,
But they loved and laughed and sorrowed
  In a thousand worlds of old;

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Now they rest and dream for ever,
  And with hearts serene and whole
See the struggle, the old fever,
  Clear as on a painted scroll.

Wandering by that gray and solemn
  Water, with its ghostly quays—
Vistas of vast arch and column,
  Shadowed by unearthly trees—
Biddings of sweet power compel me,
  And I go with bated breath,
Listening to the tales they tell me,
  Parables of Life and Death.

In a tongue that once was spoken,
  Ere the world was cooled by Time
When the spirit flowed unbroken
  Through the flesh, and the Sublime
Made the eyes of men far-seeing,
  And their souls as pure as rain,
They declare the ends of being,
  And the sacred need of pain.

For they know the sweetest reasons
  For the products most malign—
They can tell the paths and seasons
  Of the farthest suns that shine.
How the moth-wing's iridescence
  By an inward plan was wrought,
And they read me curious lessons
  In the secret ways of thought.

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A VISION OF TWILIGHT

When day turns, and over heaven
  To the balmy western verge
Sail the victor fleets of even,
  And the pilot stars emerge,
Then my city rounds and rises,
  Like a vapour formed afar,
And its sudden girth surprises,
  And its shadowy gates unbar.

Dreamy crowds are moving yonder
  In a faint and phantom blue;
Through the dusk I lean, and wonder
  If their winsome shapes are true;
But in veiling indecision
  Comes my question back again—
Which is real? The fleeting vision?
  Or the fleeting world of men?

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Good Speech

Think not, because thine inmost heart means well,
Thou hast the freedom of rude speech: sweet words
Are like the voices of returning birds
Filling the soul with summer, or a bell
That calls the weary and the sick to prayer.
Even as thy thought, so let thy speech be fair.

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The Better Day

Harsh thoughts, blind angers, and fierce hands,
That keep this restless world at strife,
Mean passions that like choking sands,
Perplex the stream of life.

Pride and hot envy and cold greed,
The cankers of the loftier will,
What if ye triumph, and yet bleed?
Ah, can ye not be still?

Oh, shall there be no space, no time,
No century of weal in store,
No freedom in a nobler clime,
Where men shall strive no more?

Where every motion of the heart
Shall serve the spirit's master-call,
Where self shall be the unseen part,
And human kindness all?

Or shall we but by fits and gleams
Sink satisfied, and cease to rave,
Find love but in the rest of dreams,
And peace but in the grave?

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White Pansies

Day and night pass over, rounding,
  Star and cloud and sun,
Things of drift and shadow, empty
  Of my dearest one.

Soft as slumber was my baby,
  Beaming bright and sweet;
Daintier than bloom or jewel
  Were his hands and feet.

He was mine, mine all, mine only,
  Mine and his the debt;
Earth and Life and Time are changers;
  I shall not forget.

Pansies for my dear one—heartsease—
  Set them gently so;
For his stainless lips and forehead,
  Pansies white as snow.

Would that in the flower-grown little
  Grave they dug so deep,
I might rest beside him, dreamless,
  Smile no more, nor weep.

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Paternity

Child, for thy love and for thy beauty's sake,
My heart hath opened warmlier to the day;
Springs of new joy and deeper tears awake,
Whose wells were buried in the baser clay.

For thy sake nobler visions are unfurled,
Vistas of tenderer humanity,
And all the little children of this world
Are dearer now to me.

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War

By the Nile, the sacred river,
  I can see the captive hordes
Strain beneath the lash and quiver
  At the long papyrus cords,
While in granite rapt and solemn,
Rising over roof and column,
  Amen-hotep dreams, or Rameses,
    Lord of Lords.

I can hear the trumpets waken
  For a victory old and far—
Carchemish or Kadesh taken—
  I can see the conqueror's car
Bearing down some Hittite valley,
Where the bowmen break and sally,
  Sargina or Esarhaddon,
    Grim with war!

From the mountain streams that sweeten
  Indus, to the Spanish foam,
I can feel the broad earth beaten
  By the serried tramp of Rome;
Through whatever foes environ
Onward with the might of iron—
  Veni, vidi; veni, vici—
    Crashing home!

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WAR

I can see the kings grow pallid
  With astonished fear and hate,
As the hosts of Amr or Khaled
  On their cities fall like fate;
Like the heat-wind from its prison
In the desert burst and risen—
  La ilaha illah 'llahu—
    God is great!

I can hear the iron rattle,
  I can see the arrows sting
In some far-off northern battle,
  Where the long swords sweep and swing;
I can hear the scalds declaiming,
I can see their eyeballs flaming,
  Gathered in a frenzied circle
    Round the king.

I can hear the horn of Uri
  Roaring in the hills enorm;
Kindled at its brazen fury,
  I can see the clansmen form;
In the dawn in misty masses,
Pouring from the silent passes
  Over Granson or Morgarten
    Like the storm.

On the lurid anvil ringing
  To some slow fantastic plan,
I can hear the sword-smith singing
  In the heart of old Japan—

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Till the cunning blade grows tragic
With his malice and his magic—
  Tenka tairan! Tenka tairan!
    War to man!

Where a northern river charges
  By a wild and moonlit glade,
From the murky forest marges,
  Round a broken palisade,
I can see the red men leaping,
See the sword of Daulac sweeping,
  And the ghostly forms of heroes
    Fall and fade.

I can feel the modern thunder
  Of the cannon beat and blaze,
When the lines of men go under
  On your proudest battle-days;
Through the roar I hear the lifting
Of the bloody chorus drifting
  Round the burning mill at Valmy—
    Marseillaise!

I can see the ocean rippled
  With the driving shot like rain,
While the hulls are crushed and crippled,
  And the guns are piled with slain;
O'er the blackened broad sea-meadow
Drifts a tall and titan shadow,
  And the cannon of Trafalgar
    Startle Spain.

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WAR

Still the tides of fight are booming,
  And the barren blood is spilt;
Still the banners are up-looming,
  And the hands are on the hilt;
But the old world waxes wiser,
From behind the bolted visor
  It descries at last the horror
    And the guilt.

Yet the eyes are dim, nor wholly
  Open to the golden gleam,
And the brute surrenders slowly
  To the godhead and the dream.
From his cage of bar and girder,
Still at moments mad with murder,
  Leaps the tiger, and his demon
    Rules supreme.

One more war with fire and famine
  Gathers—I can hear its cries—
And the years of might and Mammon
  Perish in a world's demise;
When the strength of man is shattered,
And the powers of earth are scattered,
  From beneath the ghastly ruin
    Peace shall rise!

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The Woodcutter's Hut

Far up in the wild and wintry hills in the heart of the cliff-broken woods,
Where the mounded drifts lie soft and deep in the noiseless solitudes,
The hut of the lonely woodcutter stands, a few rough beams that show
A blunted peak and a low black line, from the glittering waste of snow.
In the frost-still dawn from his roof goes up in the windless, motionless air,
The thin, pink curl of leisurely smoke; through the forest white and bare
The woodcutter follows his narrow trail, and the morning rings and cracks
With the rhythmic jet of his sharp-blown breath and the echoing shout of his axe.
Only the waft of the wind besides, or the stir of some hardy bird—
The call of the friendly chickadee, or the pat of the nuthatch—is heard;
Or a rustle comes from a dusky clump, where the busy siskins feed,
And scatter the dimpled sheet of the snow with the shells of the cedar-seed.
Day after day the woodcutter toils untiring with axe and wedge,
Till the jingling teams come up from the road that runs by the valley's edge.

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With plunging of horses, and hurling of snow, and many a shouted word,
And carry away the keen-scented fruit of his cutting, cord upon cord.
Not the sound of a living foot comes else, not a moving visitant there,
Save the delicate step of some halting doe, or the sniff of a prowling bear.
And only the stars are above him at night, and the trees that creak and groan,
And the frozen, hard-swept mountain-crests with their silent fronts of stone,
As he watches the sinking glow of his fire and the wavering flames upcaught,
Cleaning his rifle or mending his moccasins, sleepy and slow of thought.
Or when the fierce snow comes, with the rising wind, from the gray north-east,
He lies through the leaguering hours in his bunk like a winter-hidden beast,
Or sits on the hard-packed earth, and smokes by his draught-blown guttering fire,
Without thought or remembrance, hardly awake, and waits for the storm to tire.
Scarcely he hears from the rock-rimmed heights to the wild ravines below,
Near and far off, the limitless wings of the tempest hurl and go
In roaring gusts that plunge through the cracking forest, and lull, and lift,
All day without stint and all night long with the sweep of the hissing drift.

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But winter shall pass ere long with its hills of snow and its fettered dreams,
And the forest shall glimmer with living gold, and chime with the gushing of streams;
Millions of little points of plants shall prick through its matted floor,
And the wind-flower lift and uncurl her silken buds by the woodman's door;
The sparrow shall see and exult; but lo! as the spring draws gaily on,
The woodcutter's hut is empty and bare, and the master that made it is gone.
He is gone where the gathering of valley men another labour yields,
To handle the plough and the harrow, and scythe, in the heat of the summer fields.
He is gone with his corded arms, and his ruddy face, and his moccasined feet,
The animal man in his warmth and vigour, sound, and hard, and complete.
And all summer long, round the lonely hut, the black earth burgeons and breeds,
Till the spaces are filled with the tall-plumed ferns and the triumphing forest-weeds;
The thick, wild raspberries hem its walls, and stretching on either hand,
The red-ribbed stems and the giant-leaves of the sovereign spikenard stand.
So lonely and silent it is, so withered and warped with the sun and snow,
You would think it the fruit of some dead men's toil a hundred years ago;

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And he who finds it suddenly there, as he wanders far
and alone,
Is touched with a sweet and beautiful sense of something
tender and gone,
The sense of a struggling life in the waste, and the
mark of a soul's command,
The going and coming of vanished feet, the touch of a
human hand.

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Yarrow

The yarrow's beauty: fools may laugh,
  And yet the fields without it
Were shorne of half their comfort, half
  Their magic—who can doubt it?

Yon patches of a milky stain
  In verdure bright or pallid
Are something like the deep refrain
  That tunes a perfect ballad.

The meadows by its sober white—
  Though few would bend to pick it—
Are tempered as the sounds of night
  Are tempered by the cricket.

It blooms as in the fields of life
  Those spirits bloom for ever,
Unnamed, unnoted in the strife,
  Among the great and clever.

Who spread from an unconscious soul
  An aura pure and tender,
A kindlier background for the whole,
  Between the gloom and splendour.

Let others captivate the mass
  With power and brilliant seeming:
The lily and the rose I pass,
  The yarrow holds me dreaming.

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Strife and Freedom

The fool impatient of control,
  Must prove himself in every strife;
Age finds him with a withered soul,
  Exhausted in the nets of life.

Not Nature only he defies,
  The forces from of old obeyed,
But ever lifts the bitterest cries
  Against the bonds himself hath made.

The wise man sees in every let
  The purpose of the soul made plain,
A warning and a signal set
  To point it to its own domain.

The wise man storms not nor complains,
  But lets his quiet spirit shine,
And knows himself beyond his chains
  A boundless mood of the divine.

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To a Flower

Thou hast no human soul, O flower!
  Thou heedest not if I am near;
But I may come at any hour
  And take thy beauty without fear.

Thou hast no human smile to bless,
  And not with tears thine eyes are wet;
But I may love thee and caress,
  Without reproach, without regret.

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Drought

From week to week there came no rain,
  The very birds took flight,
The river shrank within its bed,
The borders of the world grew red
  With woods that flamed by night.

No rest beneath the fearful sun,
  No shelter brought the moon;
Lean cattle on the reeded fen
Searched every hole for drink, and men
  Dropped dead beneath the noon.

And ever as each sun went down
  Beyond the reeling plain,
Into the mocking sky uprist,
Like phantoms from the burning west,
  Dim clouds that brought no rain.

Each root and leaf and living thing
  Fell sicklier day by day,
And I that still must live and see
The agony of plant and tree,
  Grew weary even as they.

But oh, at last the joy, the change;
  With sudden sigh and start
I woke upon the middle night,
And thought that something strange and bright
  Had burst upon my heart.

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DROUGHT

With surging of great winds, a lull
  And hush upon the plain,
A hollow murmur far aloof,
And then a roar upon the roof,
  Down came the rushing rain.

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After Snow

High to westward lies the city,
  Soft upon the pallid blue,
With the storms of half a winter
  Packed and sifted through and through.

Spire and tower against the azure,
  Deepening as the morning grows,
From the distance faint and slender
  Rising each a shaft of rose.

Icy fringes, violet shadows,
  Every roof a creamy sheet,
Ridges of gray broken silver
  Up and down the misty street.

O'er the roofs the smoke in torrents
  Billows like a glimmering sea,
From the city's thousand chimneys
  Rolling out tumultuously.

Down the frozen street to market
  Come the woodmen team by team,
Squeaking runners, jolting cordwood,
  Frost-fringed horses jetting steam.

Some upon the load, some walking,
  Down the misty street they come,
With their cheeks as red as flannel,
  And their beards as white as foam.

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And they swing their arms to warm them—
  Ah, the wind is keen we know—
Beating crosswise round the shoulders
  Till their fingers sting and glow.

Brothers, let us serve the morning
  With a worship glad as meet,
Roll the tuque about our foreheads,
  Bind the snowshoes to our feet.

All along the north the mountains,
  Hoary with the sifted snow,
Gleaming front and powdered forest,
  Overlook the sweep below.

Where the frosted creamy splendour
  Of the morning slants and shines
On smooth fields and sheeted rivers,
  Stretching to the western pines.

Past the bridge and past the river,
  Comrades, striding, let us wind,
Over marsh and meadow, leaving
  Miles of braided track behind.

Praising with deep tongue the season,
  Master in whose caustic ken,
We become this winter morning
  Equal with the lords of men.

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The Wind's Word

The wind charged every way and fled
  Across the meadows and the wheat;
It whirled the swallows overhead,
  And swung the daisies at my feet.

As if in mockery of me,
  And all the deadness of my thought,
It mounted to the largest glee,
  And, like a lord that laughed and fought,

Took all the maples by surprise,
  And made the poplars clash and shiver,
And flung my hair about my eyes,
  And sprang and blackened on the river.

And through the elm-tree tops, and around
  The city steeples wild and high,
It floundered with a mighty sound,
  A buoyant voice that seemed to cry:

Behold how grand I am, how free!
  And all the forest bends my way!
I roam the earth, I stalk the sea,
  And make my labour but a play.

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Hepaticas

The trees to their innermost marrow
  Are touched by the sun;
The robin is here and the sparrow:
  Spring is begun!

The sleep and the silence are over:
  These petals that rise
Are the eyelids of earth that uncover
  Her numberless eyes.

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The City of the End of Things

Beside the pounding cataracts
Of midnight streams unknown to us
'Tis builded in the leafless tracts
And valleys huge of Tartarus.
Lurid and lofty and vast it seems;
It hath no rounded name that rings,
But I have heard it called in dreams
The City of the End of Things.

Its roofs and iron towers have grown
None knoweth how high within the night,
But in its murky streets far down
A flaming terrible and bright
Shakes all the stalking shadows there,
Across the walls, across the floors,
And shifts upon the upper air
From out a thousand furnace doors;
And all the while an awful sound
Keeps roaring on continually,
And crashes in the ceaseless round
Of a gigantic harmony.
Through its grim depths re-echoing
And all its weary height of walls,
With measured roar and iron ring,
The inhuman music lifts and falls.
Where no thing rests and no man is,
And only fire and night hold sway;
The beat, the thunder and the hiss
Cease not, and change not, night nor day.

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And moving at unheard commands,
The abysses and vast fires between,
Flit figures that with clanking hands
Obey a hideous routine;
They are not flesh, they are not bone,
They see not with the human eye,
And from their iron lips is blown
A dreadful and monotonous cry;
And whoso of our mortal race
Should find that city unaware,
Lean Death would smite him face to face,
And blanch him with its venomed air:
Or caught by the terrific spell,
Each thread of memory snapt and cut,
His soul would shrivel and its shell
Go rattling like an empty nut.

It was not always so, but once,
In days that no man thinks upon,
Fair voices echoed from its stones,
The light above it leaped and shone:
Once there were multitudes of men,
That built that city in their pride,
Until its might was made, and then
They withered age by age and died.
But now of that prodigious race,
Three only in an iron tower,
Set like carved idols face to face,
Remain the masters of its power;
And at the city gate a fourth,
Gigantic and with dreadful eyes,
Sits looking toward the lightless north,
Beyond the reach of memories;

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Fast rooted to the lurid floor,
A bulk that never moves a jot,
In his pale body dwells no more,
Or mind or soul,—an idiot!
But sometime in the end those three
Shall perish and their hands be still,
And with the master's touch shall flee
Their incommunicable skill.
A stillness absolute as death
Along the slacking wheels shall lie,
And, flagging at a single breath,
The fires shall moulder out and die.
The roar shall vanish at its height,
And over that tremendous town
The silence of eternal night
Shall gather close and settle down.
All its grim grandeur, tower and hall,
Shall be abandoned utterly,
And into rust and dust shall fall
From century to century;
Nor ever living thing shall grow,
Nor trunk of tree, nor blade of grass;
No drop shall fall, no wind shall blow,
Nor sound of any foot shall pass:
Alone of its accursèd state,
One thing the hand of Time shall spare,
For the grim Idiot at the gate
Is deathless and eternal there.

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Personality

O differing human heart,
Why is it that I tremble when thine eyes,
Thy human eyes and beautiful human speech,
Draw me, and stir within my soul
That subtle ineradicable longing
For tender comradeship?
It is because I cannot all at once,
Through the half-lights and phantom-haunted
mists
That separate and enshroud us life from life,
Discern the nearness or the strangeness of thy
paths,
Nor plumb thy depths.
I am like one that comes alone at night
To a strange stream, and by an unknown ford
Stands, and for a moment yearns and shrinks,
Being ignorant of the water, though so quiet it
is,
So softly murmurous,
So silvered by the familiar moon.

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Amor Vitæ

I love the warm bare earth and all
That works and dreams thereon:
I love the seasons yet to fall:
I love the ages gone,

The valleys with the sheeted grain,
The river's smiling might,
The merry wind, the rustling rain,
The vastness of the night.

I love the morning's flame, the steep
Where down the vapour clings:
I love the clouds that float and sleep,
And every bird that sings.

I love the purple shower that pours
On far-off fields at even:
I love the pine-wood dusk whose floors
Are like the courts of heaven.

I love the heaven's azure span,
The grass beneath my feet:
I love the face of every man
Whose thought is swift and sweet.

I let the wrangling world go by,
And like an idle breath
Its echoes and its phantoms fly:
I care no jot for death.

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AMOR VITÆ

Time like a Titan bright and strong
  Spreads one enchanted gleam:
Each hour is but a fluted song,
  And life a lofty dream.

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Inter Vias

'Tis a land where no hurricane falls,
But the infinite azure regards
Its waters for ever, its walls
Of granite, its limitless swards;
Where the fens to their innermost pool
With the chorus of May are aring,
And the glades are wind-winnowed and cool
With perpetual spring.

Where folded and half-withdrawn
The delicate wind-flowers blow,
And the blood-root kindles at dawn
Her spiritual taper of snow;
Where the limits are met and spanned
By a waste that no husbandman tills,
And the earth-old pine forests stand
In the hollows of hills.

'Tis the land that our babies behold,
Deep gazing when none are aware;
And the great-hearted seers of old
And the poets have known it, and there
Made halt by the well-heads of truth
On their difficult pilgrimage
From the rose-ruddy gardens of youth
To the summits of age.

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Inter Vias

Now too, as of old, it is sweet
With a presence remote and serene;
Still its byways are pressed by the feet
Of the mother immortal, its queen:
The huntress whose tresses flung free.
And her fillets of gold, upon earth,
They only have honour to see
Who are dreamers from birth.

In her calm and her beauty supreme,
They have found her at dawn or at eve,
By the marge of some motionless stream,
Or where shadows rebuild or unweave
In a murmurous alley of pine,
Looking upward in silent surprise,
A figure, slow-moving, divine,
With inscrutable eyes.

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The Sweetness of Life

It fell on a day I was happy,
  And the winds, the concave sky,
The flowers and the beasts in the meadow
  Seemed happy even as I;
And I stretched my hands to the meadow,
  To the bird, the beast, the tree:
"Why are ye all so happy?"
  I cried, and they answered me.

What sayst thou, O meadow,
  That stretchest so wide, so far,
That none can say how many
  Thy misty marguerites are?
And what say ye, red roses,
  That o'er the sun-blanched wall
From your high black-shadowed trellis
  Like flame or blood-drops fall?
    "We are born, we are reared, and we linger
      A various space and die;
    We dream, and are bright and happy,
      But we cannot answer why."

What sayst thou, O shadow,
  That from the dreaming hill
All down the broadening valley
  Liest so sharp and still?
And thou, O murmuring brooklet,
  Whereby in the noonday gleam

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THE SWEETNESS OF LIFE

The loosestrife burns like ruby,
And the branchèd asters dream?
"We are born, we are reared, and we linger
A various space and die;
We dream and are very happy,
But we cannot answer why."

And then of myself I questioned,
That like a ghost the while
Stood from me and calmly answered,
With slow and curious smile:
"Thou art born as the flowers, and wilt linger
Thine own short space and die;
Thou dream'st and art strangely happy,
But thou canst not answer why."

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Peace

Him only shall peace find
Who plans no more and long hath ceased to sue
Existent only in the flawless mind,
Accounting nothing as his due:

Whose soul hath set aside
Desire and hope; who lives no more in fee,
But looks far forth and casts his spirit wide
On Nature and Eternity:

Who sees this glorious earth—
An open radiance, a script sublime—
Regarding in her elemental mirth
Not now, nor yesterday, but time:

To whom the marvellous sun,
The dædal spectacle of earth and sky,
In endless forms and beauty never done,
The night's slow-moving majesty:

Life's never-flagging tale,
An infinite pursuit, a vast employ,
In lonely brightness far removed from bale,
Bring wonder and sufficient joy.

This is to live in truth,
To plant against the passions' dark control
The spirit's birth-right of immortal youth,
The simple standard of the soul.

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